

Unit 9

SOCIAL REALISM

Class Consciousness in American Literature, 1875–1920

Authors and Works

Featured in the Video:

Edith Wharton, “Souls Belated” (short story)
Anzia Yezierska, “The Lost ‘Beautifulness’” (short story)

Discussed in This Unit:

Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt, “The Palace-Burner,” “A Pique at Parting,” “Army of Occupation” (poetry)
Henry James, “Daisy Miller: A Study,” “The Real Thing,” “The Beast in the Jungle,” “The Jolly Corner” (short stories); “The Art of Fiction” (literary criticism)
Booker T. Washington, excerpts from *Up from Slavery* (autobiography)
Abraham Cahan, “A Sweat-Shop Romance” (short story)
Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton), “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” (short story)
W. E. B. Du Bois, excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* (social and political criticism, music history)
Theodore Dreiser, “Old Rogaum and His Theresa” (short story)
Henry Adams, excerpts from *The Education of Henry Adams* (autobiography)

Overview Questions

- What different ethnic groups inhabited America’s urban areas around the turn of the century? How did their traditions and cultural values change American culture?
- How do social realist texts represent gender? What kinds of issues inform social realist writing by women?

- How did Booker T. Washington and Henry Adams transform the genre of the autobiography? How did their work change ideas about American identity?

- How do social realist writings reflect the distinct cultures and political concerns of different ethnic groups?

- What kinds of class structures divided American society at the turn of the century? Which classes of people are depicted in realist texts?

- What political and social transformations in turn-of-the-century America led to the development of social realism? What kinds of political effects and reforms did social realist writers hope to produce?

- How did industrialism change the demographics of urban and rural society in America?

- How did immigrant culture shape life in lower-class cityscapes such as the Lower East Side of Manhattan?

- How did social realist writers depict the contrasts between American and European customs and values? Why were so many social realists interested in this question?

- How do realist writers describe the material conditions and physical surfaces of the world in which their fictional characters live? Why has their descriptive style sometimes been described as “documentary”?

- What is “limited third-person narrative”?

- How did the “gospel of wealth” build on and transform ideas about opportunity in America?

- How did writers who represented immigrant experiences challenge and broaden the myth of the American Dream?

- How did women activists and writers challenge ideas about the role of women in American society?

Learning Objectives

After students have viewed the video, read the headnotes and literary selections in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and explored related archival materials on the *American Passages* Web site, they should be able to

1. explain the distinguishing characteristics of literary realism;
2. describe the social and economic conditions in turn-of-the-century America that gave rise to social realism;
3. explain the difference between psychological and social realism;
4. discuss the political debates and reforms engendered by and reflected in social realist literature.

Instructor Overview

In 1884, Henry James announced that the “supreme virtue” of fiction, and the quality by which its success should be judged, resides in its ability to produce an “air of reality,” or an “illusion of life.” James, like many other American writers of the late nineteenth century, embraced an aesthetic of realism, which valued unsparing, accurate representations of the psychological and material realities of American life. Some realist writers, known as “social realists,” were interested in exploring problems of economic inequality and in accurately capturing the experience of urban life that was transforming the nation at the end of the nineteenth century. Others, known as “psychological realists,” were more concerned with delving beneath the surface of social life to probe the complex motivations and unconscious desires that shape their characters’ perceptions. In their commitment to documenting the realities of everyday life in America, both social and psychological realists offered penetrating insight into the repression, instabilities, and inequalities that structured late-nineteenth-century American society.

Before the Civil War, America had been a nation made up primarily of farms and small towns. Most citizens worked in agriculture or in small, family-owned shops and businesses. By the 1870s, however, the growth of industrialism had transformed

American lifestyles: more people lived in cities and worked in factories than ever before. Lured by economic opportunities, millions of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and China flooded urban centers like New York and San Francisco. Multiplying in size and serving as home to both wealthy socialites and impoverished immigrants, these cities reflected the astonishing diversity of the millions of people who lived and worked in them. While this confluence of people from radically different economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds created a rich and vibrant urban culture, it also led to social tensions and brought into relief the discrepancies between the very wealthy and the very poor. Socially conscious writers committed themselves to exploring and representing the impact of social class and ethnicity on American life, developing literary techniques designed to lend their texts an air of objective reality and psychological authenticity in the process. Some of these social realist authors wrote in order to protest the inequalities and exploitation that characterized American industrialization. Their work contributed to the growing Progressive political movements dedicated to eradicating social problems, including the oppression of women, prejudice against immigrants, discrimination against racial minorities, unsafe housing conditions, and exploitative labor practices. Other writers, such as Henry James and Edith Wharton, wrote about the experiences of the upper class.

All of the writers featured in Unit 9, “Social Realism: Class Consciousness in American Literature, 1875–1920,” share an interest in realistically depicting American life at the close of the nineteenth century, though they focus on very different social classes and ethnic groups and deploy very different literary strategies. This unit surveys works composed by Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt, Henry James, Booker T. Washington, Abraham Cahan, Edith Wharton, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton), W. E. B. Du Bois, Theodore Dreiser, Henry Adams, and Anzia Yezierska. It provides contextual background and classroom materials designed to explore the way these writers represented the impact of social class and ethnicity on urban life around the turn of the twentieth century. The video for Unit 9 focuses on two writers who chronicled life at opposite ends of the social stratum in New York City: Edith Wharton created realistic, psycho-

logically nuanced portraits of people enmeshed in urban high society, while Anzia Yeziarska explored the tensions inherent in Jewish immigrant life on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Although their depictions of New York and its inhabitants are radically different, both of these writers exposed the inconsistencies and inequalities of American urban life, with a special emphasis on the difficulties faced by women.

In its coverage of Wharton's and Yeziarska's contrasting New York experiences, the video introduces students to the literary categories of social and psychological realism and foregrounds the relationship of these movements to the problems facing an increasingly industrialized and urbanized America. The video asks students to consider the connections between the literary aesthetic of realism and the historical circumstances of late-nineteenth-century America. How did social class emerge as a focus for American writers? What role did immigration play in the development of American urban culture? How did literary realists depict the tensions and conflicts inherent in an industrialized economy? What effect did social realist writers hope to have on the problems they exposed? How do issues of gender and ethnicity shape their accounts? How does the work of social realists relate to that of psychological realists? Unit 9 helps answer these questions by providing background and teaching suggestions intended to locate these writers within their cultural contexts and to connect them with other key writers of the era. The curriculum materials expand on the video's introduction to social and psychological realism by exploring writers who developed different literary techniques and chronicled the experiences of different groups, such as Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt (a poet who experimented with realist techniques by using polyvocality and dialogue in her poems), W. E. B. Du Bois (an activist for African American rights), and Sui Sin Far (a Eurasian woman who depicted life among Chinese immigrants on the West Coast).

The video, the archive, and the curriculum materials situate these writers within several of the historical contexts that shaped their texts: (1) the explosion in immigration at the end of the nineteenth century; (2) the movement for woman suffrage; (3) ideas about capitalism and the "gospel of wealth" in newly industrialized America; (4) the

creation of a vibrant immigrant community on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; and (5) African American activists' strategies for achieving racial equality through education.

The archive and the curriculum materials suggest how the authors and texts featured in Unit 9 relate to those covered in other *American Passages* units: How do concerns about social class continue to inform American literature? What is the relationship between social class and ethnicity? How have later American writers drawn from the example of social realists to produce fiction and poetry designed to register social protest? How did the movement toward creating psychologically complex characters influence subsequent American writing? Do Americans still believe literature has the power to effect social change? How have ideas about "realism" and "accuracy" in fiction changed over time?

Student Overview

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Video Overview

- **Authors covered:** Edith Wharton, Anzia Yezierska
- **Who’s interviewed:** Judith Baskin, professor of religious studies and director of the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies (University of Oregon); Bruce Michelson, professor of English (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign); Kathryn Oberdeck, associate professor of history (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign); Abby Werlock, author, former president and current member of the Edith Wharton Society
- **Points covered:**
 - Introduction to the clash of cultures and social classes that resulted from the forces of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration in America at the turn of the century. Two very different sides of the “Gilded Age,” as this period was called, were visible in New York. There, a few city blocks separated wealthy socialites from starving immigrants.
 - Edith Wharton, a member of wealthy New York society, chronicled the world of her exclusive social set in detail. Her realist novels and stories depict the frustration of people trapped by social conventions, often focusing on the plight of society women who were treated as commodities or ornaments to be purchased and bartered by men. Her attention to the complex psychological and emotional motivations of her characters marks her work as part of the “psychological realist” movement.
 - Anzia Yezierska wrote poignantly about her experiences as a Jewish immigrant in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In her social realist fiction, she attempted

Video Overview (continued)

to explain immigrant culture to American-born readers and to broaden the boundaries of the American dream to include immigrants, the impoverished, and women. Yeziarska's stories and novels often examine the process of assimilation and acculturation, chronicling the tensions caused by immigrants' desire to be part of both the Old World and the New.

- While Wharton concentrated on psychological realism and Yeziarska was more interested in social realism, both of these women writers explored the inconsistencies and inequities of American society at the turn of the century. In the process, they created complex characters who wrestled with the restraints of class and convention. Wharton and Yeziarska left a lasting literary legacy in their willingness to depict realistically and to criticize American society.

PREVIEW

- **Preview the video:** In the decades between 1890 and 1920, America was transformed into an industrial, urban, consumer society. This transformation created unprecedented opportunities for the acquisition of wealth, but also enabled the exploitation of large classes of people. Immigrants arriving in waves from eastern and southern Europe had heard stories of a land where the streets were paved with gold, but in many cases they found only poverty and inequity in America. Writers responded to the rapidly shifting class and social structure they saw around them by producing texts that realistically depicted both the problems and the promise of industrial, urban America. In many cases, their goal was to educate readers and to stimulate reform. Edith Wharton, a member of elite New York society, explored the complexity of the social forms that governed her world in carefully crafted novels and stories. Her psychologically complex characters struggle with the conflict between their desires and the authority of social convention. Anzia Yeziarska focused on a completely different social milieu, chronicling the lives of poor Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side of New York. Her stories and novels work to broaden the boundaries of the myth of the American Dream and to make it available to women, immigrants, and the poor. While Wharton and Yeziarska moved in very different social worlds and had very different concerns, they both were interested in the plight of women who struggled against the constraints of class and convention.
- **What to think about while watching:** How do these authors challenge readers to grapple with difficult issues regarding social class, ethnic background, and gender? How do these writers react against romantic conventions and dedicate themselves to psychological and social realism? How does literary realism forward its goal of social action and reform? How do social realists broaden and transform the myth of the American Dream? How did Wharton's and Yeziarska's attention to class and gender inform subsequent American fiction?
- **Tying the video to the unit content:** Unit 9 expands on the issues featured in the video to explore the diversity of social realist writing in America in the late nineteenth century. The curriculum materials provide background on African American, Asian American, Jewish American and European American writers who chronicle the experiences of different social classes and ethnicities, and who advocate different ideas about social reform. The unit offers contextual background to further develop the video's introduction to the historical events, economic and political issues, and literary styles that shaped social realist literature.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE VIDEO

	<i>What is American literature? What are its distinctive voices and styles? How do social and political issues influence the American canon?</i>	<i>What is an American? How does American literature create conceptions of the American experience and identity?</i>	<i>How are American myths created, challenged, and re-imagined through these works of literature?</i>
Compre- hension Questions	What is social realism? How did this literary movement depart from earlier nineteenth-century literary conventions?	What groups of immigrants came to America at the end of the nineteenth century? Why did they leave their homes? How did they change the face of America?	What expectations and hopes did many immigrants have when they came to America? How was the reality of their experience different from what they imagined?
Context Questions	What kinds of social reform might Yezierska have been interested in promoting? How are her concerns different from Wharton's?	How do the characters Hannah Hayyeh and Lily Bart rebel against social and class conventions? How does their status as women affect their situations? How do their different social classes affect their situations?	How does Yezierska's work broaden and expand the possibilities of the American Dream?
Exploration Questions	How do you think the immigrant experience has changed since Yezierska wrote about it?	How has women's status in America changed since Wharton and Yezierska wrote about it?	Do you think American writers still view literature as an important instrument of social change? As an effective tool for reform?

TIMELINE

	Texts	Contexts
1870s	Henry Adams, "The New York Gold Conspiracies" (1870) Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt, "The Palace-Burner" (1874) Henry James, "Daisy Miller" (1878)	Battle of Little Bighorn ("Custer's Last Stand") (1876) Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone (1876) Reconstruction ends as federal occupying troops leave the South (1877) Edison patents the phonograph (1878)
1880s	Henry Adams, <i>Democracy</i> (1880), <i>Esther</i> (1884), <i>History of the United States of America during the Administration of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison</i> (1889) Henry James, <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> (1881), "The Art of Fiction" (1884)	American Red Cross founded (1881) Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
1890s	Henry James, "The Real Thing" (1893), <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (1898) Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895) Abraham Cahan, <i>Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto</i> (1896), "A Sweat-Shop Romance" (1898) Edith Wharton, "Souls Belated" (1899)	Massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota (1890) National American Woman Suffrage Association founded (1890) U.S. Supreme Court upholds the legality of segregation and the institutions of Jim Crow in <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896)
1900s	Theodore Dreiser, <i>Sister Carrie</i> (1900), "Old Rogaum and His Theresa" (1901) Booker T. Washington, <i>Up from Slavery</i> (1901) W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (1903), "The Talented Tenth" (1903) Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), "The Jolly Corner" (1909) Edith Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i> (1905)	Orville and Wilbur Wright achieve first powered flight, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina (1903) International Workers of the World union founded (1905) First radio broadcast from Plymouth, Massachusetts (1906) Ford Model T goes into production (1908)
1910s	Sui Sin Far, <i>Mrs. Spring Fragrance</i> (1912) Henry Adams, <i>Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres</i> (1913), <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> (1918) Abraham Cahan, <i>The Rise of David Levinsky</i> (1917) Anzia Yezierska, "The Fat of the Land" (1919)	World War I (1914–18) United States enters World War I (1917) Russian Revolution (1917)
1920s	Edith Wharton, <i>The Age of Innocence</i> (1920) Anzia Yezierska, <i>Hungry Hearts</i> (1920), "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" (1920) Theodore Dreiser, <i>An American Tragedy</i> (1925)	Wall Street Crash begins Great Depression (1929)

AUTHOR/TEXT REVIEW

Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt (1836–1919)

A poet widely published in nineteenth-century America, Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt saw hundreds of her verses appear in newspapers and magazines, and she published fifteen collected volumes of her work. The complexity and subtlety of some of her poetry tended to trouble critics, however, who accused her of being “wayward” and “enigmatic.” Although she sometimes wrote within the genteel, sentimental tradition that dominated American women’s poetry in the nineteenth century, Piatt—to her critics’ dismay—also experimented with more challenging and allusive forms of expression. Piatt’s subtle and often ironic aesthetic went largely unappreciated until contemporary feminist literary critics led a reassessment of her importance. Today Piatt’s work is beginning to be recognized as a significant forerunner to the modernist poetry that emerged in the early twentieth century.

Sarah Piatt was raised in rural Kentucky and attended a women’s college there. She received a liberal arts education, with a particular focus on the classics and on romantic poetry. Her interest in poetry was strengthened by her marriage in 1861 to John James Piatt, himself a poet. The couple eventually had seven children and John James, or J. J., took a variety of editorial and government jobs to support his large family. Over the course of his career, Piatt moved his family several times, living in Washington, D.C., Ohio, and Ireland. After growing up in the South, moving to the North, and living in Europe, Sarah Piatt developed a sophisticated awareness of cultural differences and the relativity of one’s point of view, insights that permeate her poetry. With J. J. serving as editor and agent, Piatt published in many of the prestigious journals and magazines of the time and brought out a series of books. Despite her productivity, however, she and her husband both died in poverty.

Though Piatt’s work sometimes deals with conventional sentimental themes such as children, romance, and death, she often uses her poetry to self-consciously deflate sentimental conventions. Her later work is characterized by a dramatic realism that relies on dialogue to elucidate her complex and subtle meaning. Many of Piatt’s best poems do not rely on a single lyric voice but instead introduce multiple speakers (often children). This multitude of voices can be confusing to readers—an early reviewer complained that, by not making clear who is speaking and in what context, Piatt’s poems leave “much to be supplied by intuition and imagination.” But if engaging with Piatt’s work can sometimes feel like trying to solve a difficult riddle, most readers will find the rich, complex results to be worth the effort.



[7634] Anonymous, *National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia* (c. 1910–50), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-91935].

[1927] William M. Smith, [Untitled] (1865), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-B8171-7861]. This picture shows African American soldiers who comprised the band of the 107th Colored Infantry: one of the many contradictions of the Civil War was that African American soldiers fought for the Confederacy to protect the institution of slavery, and others fought for the Union, where they were denied equal treatment before the law. Of the many writers whose work was affected by the Civil War, poet Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt stands out for holding both the North and the South responsible for the war and its carnage. Though she lived in Union territory, her life and poetry were informed by the perspective of her southern childhood: her parents owned slaves, and she acknowledged her complicity in the forces that caused the devastation she described in her poems.

[7632] Keystone View Company, *Burial of Victims of the Maine in their Final Resting Place, Arlington Cemetery, VA, Dec. 28, 1899* (1899), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-92665]. Photograph of caskets, draped with the American flag and lined in rows, ready for burial at the Arlington Cemetery in Virginia. Four million people visit the cemetery annually to pay tribute to war heroes, to attend funeral services, and to view headstones that tell America's history.

[7634] Anonymous, *National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia* (c. 1910–50), courtesy of the Library of Congress, [LC-USZ62-91935]. Photograph of Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, with the Memorial Amphitheater in the foreground. The amphitheater was dedicated in 1920 after a campaign for its construction by Judge Ivory G. Kimball, who wanted to have an assembling place for honoring defenders of America.

[9140] Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842), courtesy of Project Gutenberg. Browning's poem "My Last Duchess" is a quintessential example of the poetic genre of the dramatic monologue. The first-person speaker is a duke who hints at the murder of his wife, even as he arranges for a new marriage.

■ Many students will find "The Palace-Burner" difficult to penetrate because the context for the speaker's musings may not be readily apparent to them and because the poem includes the voices of both its primary speaker and her son. Be sure to explain that the speaker is reflecting on a picture she and her son are looking at in a newspaper. The two of them discuss the pictured woman, who was a radical and a "palace-burner" during the political struggles in France in the 1870s. Have your students read the poem out loud and then work through it slowly as a class. Who is speaking? Which questions are asked by the primary speaker's son? Which does she ask herself? Why does Piatt include these different voices in her poem without always clarifying who is speaking? In order to explain the "dramatic" quality of the poem, you might bring in one of Robert Browning's dramatic monologues ("My Last Duchess," "Porphyria's Lover," or "The Laboratory" would be good choices). Ask students to think about the effect of these dramatic monologues in which the voice of the speaker is not always that of the poet. What kind of challenges does the distance among the poet, the speaker, and the speaker's interlocutors pose for the reader? How do Piatt's dramatic poems compare to Browning's?

■ After reading and discussing "The Palace-Burner," ask your students to choose a picture that they find particularly moving in a magazine or newspaper and then write a poem or reflection in which they explain the effect the picture has on them. Have volunteers share their poems with the class and discuss the challenges they experienced in writing this kind of piece.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Who are the characters in "The Palace-Burner"?

Who is speaking? What is the "picture in the newspaper" mentioned in the subtitle?

Context: How does the speaker in "A Pique at Parting" critique romantic conventions? How does her analysis of the power struggle between men and women compare to Lydia's experience in Edith Wharton's "Souls Belated"?

Context: Examine the picture of Arlington National Cemetery featured in the archive. How does it compare to Piatt's description of it in "Army of Occupation"? Why is Arlington such a powerful place for her?

Exploration: Why do you think Piatt was largely ignored by literary critics until recently? Why do you think feminist critics find her appealing now? How do Piatt's poems relate to the sentimental tradition within which many nineteenth-century women wrote? How do her poems anticipate the work of later American women poets, like Amy Lowell or H.D.? How do poems like Lowell's "The Captured Goddess" or H.D.'s "Helen" compare to Piatt's attempts to challenge traditional representations of women? How do later poets like Lowell and H.D. continue to wrestle with one of the

problems that concerned Piatt—how to be a woman poet within a culture where women were perceived more as subjects for poetry than as writers of it?

Exploration: Why do you think Piatt is included in this unit on social realism? In what way might her poetry be understood as “realist”?

Henry James (1843–1916)

Known for his sophisticated style, precise language, extraordinary productivity, and innovative attention to the novel form, Henry James ranks among the greatest American writers. He was born in the mid-nineteenth century in New York City. His father, Henry James Sr., was a wealthy and eccentric philosopher who initiated his young son into what would become a lifelong habit of travel. The family, eventually consisting of five children, crossed the Atlantic Ocean repeatedly before 1860, and the James children were brought up and educated in Europe almost as much as they were in America.

When the family returned to America just before the Civil War, two of James’s brothers enlisted in the Union Army, but Henry himself stayed out of the war because of an injury. After a brief period studying law at Harvard, he began publishing stories and reviews in the major American magazines of his day, and by 1869, had committed himself to a literary career. He traveled back and forth between Europe and America several times before finally deciding to settle in England, first in London and eventually at Lamb House, an eighteenth-century mansion located in a coastal town southeast of London. He became a naturalized British subject near the end of his life. James always maintained an active social life (he was famous for dining out almost every night of the week) and had a close relationship with his family, especially with his brother William, a pioneering American psychologist who was an important influence on James. But despite his familial and social ties, James spent much of his time alone at his writing desk. He never married, and he poured most of his emotional energy into his work.

Scholars traditionally have divided James’s career into three phases: a lengthy apprenticeship (1864–81), the middle years (1882–95), and his major phase (1896–16). James first achieved international fame with his story “Daisy Miller: A Study” (1878), which deals with the contrast between European and American manners by exploring a young girl’s disregard for social codes. Although some readers considered the story shocking, it was widely reprinted. James’s early phase culminated with *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), a novel which many critics regard as one of his masterpieces. During what James referred to as his middle years, he produced several long political novels (none of which sold well), numerous short stories, some of his most influential literary criticism (including “The Art of Fiction”), and a disastrously unsuccessful play. James’s major phase is characterized by his increasing complexity and subtlety as a writer and by the culmination of his development of a new



[1581] John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882; John Singer Sargent, American (1856–1925). Oil on canvas; 87 3/8 x 87 5/8 in. (221.9 x 222.6 cm). Gift of Mary Louisa Boit, Julia Overing Boit, Jane Hubbard Boit, and Florence D. Boit in memory of their father, Edward Darley Boit [19.124].

modernist aesthetic for the novel form. It was also a period of intense productivity: he wrote thirty-seven stories, some of his most famous novellas (including the ghost story *The Turn of the Screw*), and several of his most important novels. Between 1906 and 1910 James embarked on the monumental project of revising his own work for publication in the twenty-four-volume New York edition of his *Collected Works*.

Throughout his career, James maintained an interest in contrasting European and American manners, and in exploring the ways psychologically complex characters deal with ambiguous social and intellectual problems. James has sometimes been criticized for the rarified quality of his work. For some readers, he seems to neglect “flesh and blood” problems in order to focus on the neurotic anxieties of over-privileged, self-absorbed characters. But for James, the value of fiction writing lay in providing “a personal, a direct impression of life,” which to him was best achieved not by chronicling material conditions but rather by examining the subjective, psychological complexities of human beings. His interest in psychology led him to develop the use of **limited third-person narration**, which is often regarded as one of his major contributions to American fiction. By relying on narrators who are not omniscient but instead render descriptions and observations through the limitations of the central character, James opens his stories to ambiguity. Readers must do more work—and involve themselves more in the process of meaning-making—to understand the relationship of the stories to their narration.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask your students to write a short paraphrase of “what happens” in “The Jolly Corner” or “The Beast in the Jungle.” When they are finished, discuss their summaries as a class. Because these stories are so complex—and focus so narrowly on their psychologically troubled main characters—students will have very different ideas about what should be considered the “action” of the story. You can use this project to make the point that “reality” is highly subjective in a James story. Readers will interpret the characters’ psychological experiences differently, just as two characters in the same story will interpret the events differently.

■ With its ironic examination of the relationship between representations and reality, “The Real Thing” can serve as an excellent jumping-off point for a discussion of realism as an artistic movement. The story serves as a kind of fable about the artistic production of realistic representation. The reader, along with the artist in the story, comes to realize that it is precisely *because* the Monarchs represent British aristocratic values that they fail as models of the type. Artistic inspiration seems to depend on artificiality and pretense (figured by the lower-class models) and is hampered by the stifling presence of the “real thing.” (To help your students understand the relationship between narrative and visual realism, you might

have them examine some of the late-nineteenth-century realist paintings featured in the archive, such as John Singer Sargent's *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* or *Simplon Pass: The Tease*.) Ask your students to think about the implications of James's fable about the making of realistic art. What is the relationship between the artist and reality? What seems to be the goal of the "realist" art object? What is the relationship between the artist in the story and Henry James, the writer?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why do Winterbourne's aunt, Mrs. Walker, and the rest of polite society in Europe shun Daisy Miller? What exactly do they find so shocking about her? How does she challenge conventional social codes?

Comprehension: According to James, what qualities characterize successful fiction? What kind of manifesto for fiction writing does he lay out in "The Art of Fiction"?

Context: Like Edith Wharton, Henry James frequently wrote about Americans traveling and living in Europe. What characteristics mark a typical "American" character for James? How does he see Americans as different from Europeans? How does his analysis of the contrast between Americans and Europeans compare to Wharton's?

Context: In "The Jolly Corner," Spencer Brydon is in the process of overseeing the conversion of one of his properties into "a tall mass of flats," while maintaining the other as an intact, but empty, mansion. What do these two types of housing structures represent to Brydon? Why does the realization that he has a "capacity for business and a sense for construction" create such harrowing anxieties for him? What is his relationship to the large family mansion on the "jolly corner"?

Context: James was once driven through the Lower East Side where he saw the crowded tenements and bustling commercial stalls of the Jewish section. He reported that he was disgusted by a sense of "a great swarming." How might knowledge of James's reaction to the tenements inform our understanding of "The Jolly Corner"? How do you think immigrants living in overcrowded tenements would react to Brydon's story of his frightening encounter with his empty mansion? For help in forming your response, see the material featured in the Lower East Side context in this unit.

Exploration: In 1879, James wrote the first critical-biographical book about Nathaniel Hawthorne's literary career. Why do you think James was so interested in Hawthorne? What values and interests do they share? How are they different from one another?

JAMES WEB ARCHIVE

[1581] John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882; John Singer Sargent, American (1856–1925). Oil on canvas; 87 3/8 x 87 5/8 in. (221.9 x 222.6 cm). Gift of Mary Louisa Boit, Julia Overing Boit, Jane Hubbard Boit, and Florence D. Boit in memory of their father, Edward Darley Boit [19.124]. Sargent painted untraditional images such as this one of his friend Edward Boit's daughters. He also painted portraits of Henry James, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

[2612] Robert J. Rayner, *View of Broadway in the City of New York* (1913), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-98471]. With the expansion of industrial capitalism in the United States and the influx of immigrants into the nation's cities, urban growth was a major feature of the period between the Civil War and World War I. In New York, the wealthiest of the "Robber Baron" aristocracy lived just blocks from the most destitute of the poor.

[3096] John Singer Sargent, *Simplon Pass: The Tease* (1911), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Simplon Pass: The Tease*, Object Place: Simplon Pass, Italian-Swiss Border, 1911; John Singer Sargent, American, 1856–1925. Transparent and opaque watercolor over graphite, with wax resist, on paper; 40 x 52.39 cm (15 3/4 x 20 5/8 in.) The Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund, 12.216. Sargent's work defined American painting at the beginning of the twentieth century, from portraits to murals to outdoor watercolor scenes like this one. This painting captures the mood and feeling of its subjects, who are having an outing at the Simplon Pass near the Italian-Swiss border.

Booker T. Washington (1856–1915)

Born into slavery and poverty, Booker T. Washington grew up to become one of the most powerful African American public figures in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. As a speaker, writer, and educator, Washington articulated ideas that had a tremendous influence on the state of race relations in America. In his autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (1901), he told the story of his life as the fulfillment of the mythic American Dream: he stresses that his success was achieved through hard work, perseverance, and virtue. Washington's skillful self-presentation and his remarkable abilities as a speaker, writer, and rhetorician played no small part in his rise to leadership and his consolidation of power within the African American community.

Washington was born on a plantation near Roanoke, Virginia. His childhood was spent in slavery, and he grew up, as he put it, in “the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings.” Freed after the Civil War, he and his mother moved to West Virginia, where his stepfather had found work as a miner. Although he was eager to attend school, Washington was forced to help support his family by working in salt and coal mines and as a domestic servant. He eventually acquired a basic education by teaching himself the alphabet, studying with a local schoolteacher in the evenings, and convincing the wife of his white employer to give him lessons.

In 1872 Washington was admitted to the Hampton Institute, an industrial school established by the state of Virginia to educate freed blacks and Native Americans. Washington had to work as a janitor to support himself at Hampton, but he still managed to graduate with honors in three years. After college, Washington worked as a teacher until he was selected to serve as the principal of Tuskegee, a new school for black students in Alabama.

From 1881 until his death in 1915, Washington devoted much of his considerable energy and talent to establishing and maintaining Tuskegee as a prestigious black-run institution. Working with little money and few resources, he managed to transform the school from a small college of thirty students into a respected institution with an endowment of \$2 million, a staff of two hundred, and a student body of four thousand. Convinced that African Americans would achieve social and economic advancement only through acquiring practical industrial and agricultural skills, Washington focused Tuskegee's curriculum on vocational subjects such as carpentry, masonry, farming, and domestic science. The school also stressed hygiene, manners, and religious instruction.

Building on Tuskegee's success, Washington concentrated on publicizing his educational and social philosophy on a broader level. In 1895 he captured national attention when he delivered a speech on



[1824] Palmer, *Instructor and Three Graduates with Diplomas and Geraniums* (1905), courtesy of the Wm. B. Becker Collection/photography museum.com.

race relations at the Atlanta Exposition. Later known as the “Atlanta Compromise,” the speech emphasized the importance of attaining economic security through pragmatic, nonconfrontational means. Washington urged African Americans not to strain race relations by demanding civil rights, but instead to settle for peaceful coexistence and economic opportunity. As he put it, “in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.” While some African Americans resented Washington’s willingness to sacrifice civil equality and political rights for menial jobs and toleration, many others saw Washington’s plan in a positive light. In a climate in which African Americans were routinely oppressed, disenfranchised, and targeted for violence, it is perhaps understandable that Washington’s promises of economic opportunity and peace would seem appealing. Organized opposition to Washington’s “accommodationist” philosophy within the African American community would not arise until many years later (most notably under the leadership of W. E. B. Du Bois), and, following the Atlanta convention, Washington emerged as a powerful leader who commanded respect from both blacks and whites. The white press hailed him as the successor of Frederick Douglass and the undisputed leader of his race.

Washington consolidated his almost mythic position with the publication of *Up from Slavery*. Drawing on the literary models of Douglass’s and Benjamin Franklin’s autobiographies, he told his life story as an exemplary lesson in hard work, thrift, and virtue. With its deceptively simple and direct style, the book became a best seller and was translated into more than ten languages.

Washington’s willingness to compromise on African American civil equality—a philosophy that had ensured his popularity in his own time—has hurt his reputation with subsequent generations of American readers. Recent scholarship, however, has made the case that Washington’s placating and accommodating stance was merely a public screen to gain favor with white authorities. According to this theory, Washington worked covertly to challenge racial injustice while maintaining a nonthreatening appearance. While critical debates continue on the nature of Washington’s racial philosophy and political strategy, no one denies that he was an influential force in bringing African American concerns to public consciousness at the end of the nineteenth century.

TEACHING TIPS

■ In *Up from Slavery*, Washington reprints his Atlanta Exposition address, following it with excerpts from newspaper reviews praising the speech and a congratulatory letter from President Grover Cleveland. Ask students why they think Washington included all this supplementary material in his autobiography. What effect do the letters and newspaper reviews have on the reader’s understanding of the speech? Ask students to imagine that they listened to the speech

**WASHINGTON WEB
ARCHIVE**

[1824] Palmer, *Instructor and Three Graduates with Diplomas and Geraniums* (1905), courtesy of the Wm. B. Becker Collection/photography museum.com. Former slave Booker T. Washington was deeply involved with the Tuskegee Institute throughout his lifetime. Washington advocated vocational training for African Americans as a means by which they could achieve economic advancement. His social philosophy was later criticized by such figures as W. E. B. Du Bois.

[3079] Richmond Barth, *Bust of Booker T. Washington* (c. 1920), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration [NWDNS-H-HN-BAR-38]. Washington was the most prominent African American at the turn of the twentieth century; he worked for most of his life to expand and support Tuskegee College in Alabama; his best-known literary work is *Up from Slavery*.

[6937] R. V. Randolph, *Booker T. Washington* (1913), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection [Portfolio 189, Folder 2a]. This poetic tribute, published as a broadside, reads, in part, “Now ‘Tuskegee and its People’ know, / That fitness and efficiency win; / The Negro in Business will show, / The methods make a place for men”—an apt reference to Washington’s vision that education in the mechanical arts would raise African Americans from their subjugated status.

[7852] Arthur Rothstein, *Tuskegee Institute, Alabama Students* (1942), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USW3-000237-D]. Now designated a historic site by the National Park system, Tuskegee Institute was the lifelong project of Booker T. Washington and also the site of George Washington Carver’s revolutionary agricultural experiments.

at the Atlanta Exposition and then have them write newspaper reviews or letters to Washington in which they articulate their responses to his philosophy.

■ The opening of *Up from Slavery* consciously engages with autobiographical conventions. Ask students to pay attention to the way Washington opens the story of his life. What is the effect of Washington’s inability to say where and when he was born, or to give any details about his ancestry? How are we meant to understand the line “I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at sometime”? Is this humorous? Tragic? Both?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Washington closes Chapter 15 of *Up from Slavery* with some reflections on time management and organization. What kind of lessons and life tips does he impart to his readers? What values underlie his manner of structuring his work and leisure?

Context: Like Henry Adams, Washington uses his autobiography as an occasion to reflect on his own education and his educational philosophy more generally. How do Washington’s ideas about education compare to Adams’s? How might the two men’s radically different backgrounds contribute to their different ideas on what constitutes a useful education?

Context: Examine the bust of Washington and the broadside poem celebrating his accomplishments featured in the archive. What vision of Washington as a man and as a leader do these pieces construct? How did Washington contribute to his own mythology in *Up from Slavery*?

Exploration: Many scholars have argued that Washington consciously modeled *Up from Slavery* on Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*. What do these two texts have in common? What structures and tropes does Washington borrow from Franklin? How does his life story complicate Franklin’s construction of an exemplary American identity?

Abraham Cahan (1860–1951)

As a journalist and fiction writer, Abraham Cahan explored the social, cultural, and spiritual tensions of the Eastern European Jewish immigrant experience in New York. His sensitive treatment of the dual identities of Jewishness and Americanism, and of issues of accommodation and acculturation, made him an influential spokesperson for his community.

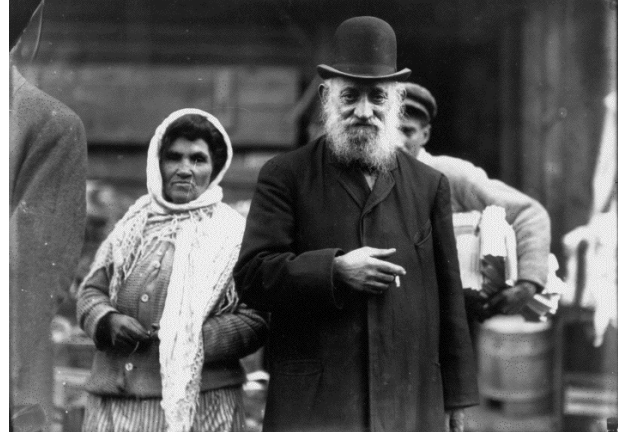
Born into an educated, Orthodox Jewish family in a small village near Vilna, Russia, Cahan trained to become a teacher. By the time he graduated from the Vilna Teachers’ Institute in 1881, he had embraced the socialist cause and had become involved in radical intellectual circles. Because of these connections, he came under suspicion for anti-Czarist activities and was forced to flee Russia for

the United States. Upon arrival in America, Cahan settled in New York's Lower East Side, at that time a neighborhood inhabited mainly by immigrants, including a large population of Eastern European Jews. He soon became a leading figure in the community, lecturing on socialism, organizing labor unions, teaching English to other immigrants, and writing stories and newspaper articles in Russian, English, and **Yiddish**.

Cahan's writing career was varied and long. He served as co-editor of the first Yiddish-language socialist weekly paper, the *Neie Tzeit*, and by 1890 edited the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the newspaper of the United Hebrew Trades. In 1897 Cahan helped to found the influential and widely distributed Yiddish newspaper the *Jewish Daily Forward* and served as its editor for almost fifty years. In the *Forward*, Cahan pioneered the use of conversational, Americanized Yiddish that could be easily understood by his immigrant readers. He also introduced the popular ***Bintl Briv*** column. An early, Yiddish, "Dear Abby"-style advice column, the *Bintl Briv* (or "Bundle of Letters") printed questions from readers and offered authoritative advice on romantic, family, and social issues.

Cahan paralleled his career as a journalist with a distinguished career as a creative writer of short stories and novels, both in Yiddish and in English. In 1895, one of Cahan's Yiddish stories was translated and published in *Short Stories*, where it attracted the attention of the prominent literary critic and realist writer William Dean Howells. Impressed by the story, Howells encouraged Cahan to write a longer work focusing on the Jewish immigrant experience in New York. The result, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, appeared in 1896 to great acclaim. In a front-page review of the novella for the *New York World*, Howells proclaimed Cahan "a new star of realism." After *Yekl* Cahan found himself an established part of the New York literary scene. In the decade that followed, he published a series of short stories and novels dealing primarily with the social realities of the Jewish immigrant experience. His career as a creative writer culminated with his masterpiece, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). The story of a poor Jewish immigrant who rises to become a wealthy garment producer, the novel details the costs and conflicts of pursuing material success and assimilating into American capitalist society.

In 1946, Cahan suffered a stroke that slowed his writing career and led him to give up the day-to-day management of the *Daily Forward*. When he died, he was recognized as both an influential leader of the Jewish American community and the foremost chronicler of the Jewish immigrant experience. His ability to mediate between cultures and to articulate the struggles and successes of Jewish Americans left an enduring legacy that has shaped the work of a long line of important twentieth-century Jewish American writers.



[3046] Lewis Hine, *Old Jewish Couple, Lower East Side* (1910), courtesy of the George Eastman House.

[3046] Lewis Hine, *Old Jewish Couple, Lower East Side* (1910), courtesy of the George Eastman House. Upon arrival in the United States, Eastern European Jewish immigrants were faced with difficult questions: which aspects of their ethnic identity should they preserve, which reshape? Abraham Cahan addressed these and other topics in his *Bintl Briv* column.

[5023] Detroit Publishing Company, *Mulberry Street, New York City* (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-1584]. New York City received huge numbers of immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. In the bustling streets of the Lower East Side, Old World met New in a population that ranged from Eastern European and Russian Jews to Irish Catholics.

[5124] T. De Thulstrup, *Home of the Poor* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75197]. This illustration shows an interior view of a crowded New York City tenement. The living conditions of the city's poor at the turn of the twentieth century eventually sparked a wave of social reform.

[7034] Anonymous, *Peddlers—New York's "Little Jerusalem"* (between 1908 and 1916), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-95683]. New York's densely populated Lower East Side was home to innumerable vendors, as well as great poverty. Its largest ethnic community was Jews from Eastern Europe.

■ Cahan's *Bintl Briv* advice column was enormously popular with his immigrant readers. As he stated in his memoirs, "People often need the opportunity to be able to pour out their heavy-laden hearts. Among our immigrant masses this need was very marked. Hundreds of thousands of people, torn from their homes and their dear ones, were lonely souls who thirsted for expression, who wanted to hear an opinion, who wanted advice in solving their weighty problems." Have your students consider what kinds of problems the advice-seekers would probably have shared with the editor. How would their problems be specific to their position as Jewish immigrants? How would their concerns compare to those expressed in such contemporary advice columns as *Dear Abby*? Ask students to imagine that they are newly arrived immigrants in the United States. Have them compose their own *Bintl Briv* letters and/or answers. (A selection of *Bintl Briv* letters can be found in *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*.)

■ Ask your class to analyze the title of "A Sweat-Shop Romance." Why might Cahan have given the story this title? To what contradictory immigrant experiences does the title allude? What kinds of connotations do the words "sweat-shop" and "romance" have? Does a sweatshop seem a likely place for romance? As they try to define the term "sweatshop," students could look at the pictures of Lower East Side dwellings and workplaces featured in the archive and read carefully Cahan's description of Lipman's "cockroach" shop.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does Beile refuse to obey Zlate's command to run an errand for her? Do you think her reasons have more to do with her reluctance to waste time and thus lose money or with her anger at being treated like a servant?

Comprehension: Lipman's factory is described as a "task shop." What is a task shop? How are the workers paid? What distinctions exist among the machine-operator, the baster, the finisher, and the presser?

Context: In both Anzia Yezierska's "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" and Cahan's "A Sweat-Shop Romance," the main characters are treated unfairly by fellow Jewish immigrants (the greedy landlord Mr. Rosenblatt in Yezierska's story, and the overbearing Zlate in Cahan's). What social and economic differences divide the Lower East Side Jewish community in these stories? How does wealth—and the adoption of American capitalist values—seem to affect the immigrants depicted in these stories?

Exploration: Cahan later expressed doubt about the romantic, happy ending of the story—in his memoirs he wondered, "How on earth did it pop into my head?" Do you think the story's romantic resolution troubles its status as a piece of realist writing?

Edith Wharton (1862–1937)

Edith Wharton was born into a wealthy, conservative, New York family that traced its lineage back to the colonial settlement of the city. Although growing up within the upper echelon of New York society provided her with rich material for her fiction, the experience did not encourage Wharton to become a novelist. In the rather rigid social world in which she was raised, women were expected to become wives, not writers. Nonetheless, Wharton began experimenting with writing poetry and fiction at a young age. That she became a major figure of American letters is a testament to her extraordinary talent as a social observer and literary stylist.

Wharton debuted in New York society at the age of seventeen and married Bostonian Edward Wharton a few years later. Edward was thirteen years older than his wife and did not share her taste for art, literature, or intellectual pursuits. Given that the couple had little in common besides their privileged upbringing, it is perhaps not surprising that the marriage was not an emotionally satisfying one. Wharton soon found herself feeling stifled in her role as a society wife. When she eventually began suffering from depression and nervous complaints, her doctors encouraged her to write as a therapeutic release.

Wharton began her career by publishing a few poems and co-writing a popular guide to interior decoration. Still in print today, *The Decoration of Houses* is considered one of the most important American books about the art of interior design. By the 1890s, after the publication of a well-received collection of short stories, Wharton began to perceive authorship as her life's avocation. When her novel *The House of Mirth* became a bestseller in 1905, she found herself ranked among the most important American writers of the day. Her critical success proved inspiring: the productive years between 1905 and 1920 are traditionally understood as Wharton's major period.

Around 1910, Wharton moved permanently to France. After she divorced her husband in 1913, she devoted herself to travel, writing, and cultivating a wide circle of friends, including such artistic luminaries as Henry James, Jean Cocteau, and Sinclair Lewis. When World War I broke out in Europe, Wharton threw herself into charitable work in support of her adopted country.

Although she lived abroad, she continued to focus her fiction mainly on Americans. Much of her most-noted work, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Age of Innocence* (1920), is set in the New York society she had known in the late nineteenth century. Themes that recur in almost all of Wharton's fiction include individuals' inability to successfully transcend repressive social conventions, the entrap-



[4621] Peter Powell, *Edith Wharton* (c. 1910), courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

WHARTON WEB ARCHIVE

[2572] James Abbot McNeil Whistler, *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black: Portrait of Theodore Duret* (1883), courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wolfe Fund, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, 1919. (13.20) Photograph © 1984 The Metropolitan Museum of Art. French art critic and collector Theodore Duret is shown in full evening dress. This painting was ranked by many as the best portrait of Duret by any of the great realist artists of the period. Like novelists Henry James, Edith Wharton, and Kate Chopin, Whistler is interested in depicting the inner lives as well as the opulence of the upper classes. Ezra Pound's poem "To Whistler, American" lauds the artist.

[3636] Edward Harrison May, *Edith Jones* (1870), courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. British painter Edward Harrison May painted portraits for affluent Americans and Europeans. Edith (Jones) Wharton was born into a prominent New York City family; much of her fiction paints the upper class in an ironic light.

[3643] Edward Harrison May, *Edith Jones at Age Nineteen* (1891), courtesy of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City. Edith Jones made her debut in New York society at the age of seventeen and a few years later married the wealthy Edward Wharton of Boston. Her fiction details the confining traditions of upper-class life.

[4621] Peter Powell, *Edith Wharton* (c. 1910), courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Photo of Wharton in a fur-collared coat. Wharton wrote a number of novels that depict upper-class society. She was particularly concerned about the status of women.

[4649] Anonymous, *Edith Wharton with a Dog on Her Lap, Henry James, Chauffeur Charles Cook, and Teddy Wharton, Holding Two Dogs* (c. 1904), courtesy of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Wharton and James enjoyed a great friendship. Both were from prominent families, and both lived outside of the United States.

ment of women in marriage, the differences between American and European customs, and the rivalry between "old money" and the *nouveaux riches*. Wharton remained very productive into her old age—in the course of her career she published nineteen novels, eleven collections of short stories, and several nonfiction studies, memoirs, poems, and reviews—though critics generally agree that the quality of her work declined after 1920. However, her final unfinished novel, *The Buccaneers* (published posthumously in 1938), outshines everything else she wrote at the end of her career and suggests that her literary powers had not diminished with age. Wharton was consistently ranked among the most significant American writers of her generation, and she was the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate from Yale. She died of a stroke in France at the age of seventy-five.

TEACHING TIPS

■ When Lydia threatens to leave Gannett in "Souls Belated," he responds by asking her, "And where would you go if you left me?" Ask your students to brainstorm about the options Lydia would have if she left Gannett. (You might refer them to the Core Context "Making Amendments: The Woman Suffrage Movement" for insight into the limits women faced and the opportunities that were beginning to open to them at the end of the nineteenth century.) Be sure to point out that in Lydia's social class—much like Wharton's own—many professional occupations would be perceived as inappropriate for women. The exercise should help students realize why Lydia feels so trapped in her role as a companion to Gannett.

■ To make the context of the story clearer—and the characters' problems more compelling—you might explain to your students that divorce was neither as common nor as socially acceptable in Wharton's time as it is in twenty-first-century America. Along the same lines, it is important for students to understand that Lydia and Gannett are not being overly cautious in pretending to be married since sexual relationships outside of marriage were considered scandalous. Ask students to pay attention to Lydia's attitude toward the arrival of her divorce papers at the beginning of the story (she refers to them as "the *thing*," and the presence of the document seems to exacerbate her anxiety and frustration with her situation). You can compare Lydia's scruples about her divorce to Mrs. Linton/Cope's glee when the envelope containing her divorce arrives at the hotel. What conclusions are readers supposed to draw about these characters based on their reactions to their divorce documents? Why is the arrival of the legal document so important to these women?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why is Lydia so reluctant to marry Gannett? Why does she insist that marriage would be "humiliating" and a "cheap compromise"?

Comprehension: What social codes structure the lives of the inhabitants of the Hotel Bellosguardo? Who are the social leaders?

Context: Like many of Wharton's stories and novels, "Souls Belated" presents marriage as a kind of imprisonment for women. Why does Lydia see marriage in this way? How does she attempt to escape this imprisonment? Why is she successful or unsuccessful? How do the restrictions and frustrations that Lydia faces compare to the restrictions faced by the impoverished Hannah Hayyeh in Anzia Yezierska's "The Lost 'Beautifulness'"?

Context: Based on your reading of Wharton's and James's stories of Americans living and traveling in Europe, what customs and values seem to separate Americans from Europeans?

Exploration: How does Lydia's attempt to rebel against marital conventions compare to Edna Pontellier's rebellion in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*?

Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) (1865–1914)

Writing around the turn of the twentieth century, Sui Sin Far, or Edith Maud Eaton, challenged entrenched social and political discrimination against Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans by publishing eloquent stories and articles about Chinese culture in North America. Her goal was to encourage mutual understanding and respect between the Anglo and Asian communities. As she said, "I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant 'connecting link.'" With her cosmopolitan background and mixed ethnicity, Sui Sin Far was an excellent spokesperson for these multicultural ideals. Born in England in 1865, she was one of fourteen children raised by a white English father and a Chinese mother who had been educated in England. Because Sui Sin Far's father, Edward Eaton, was a struggling landscape painter, the family moved frequently and was always financially unstable. Eventually settling in Montreal, the Eatons raised their children to be creative, individualistic, and self-sufficient. Sui Sin Far started earning money to contribute to the family's finances while she was still a girl, selling crocheted lace and paintings on the street, publishing poetry, and eventually undertaking stenography and office work. Later, she supplemented her income by publishing articles and stories in magazines and newspapers.

Although she was educated in British and Canadian schools, spoke only English, and could easily "pass" as white, Sui Sin Far chose to embrace and emphasize her Chinese heritage. Soon after she began publishing, she adopted the name Sui Sin Far in place of her English name, Edith Maud Eaton. The Chinese name translates as "fragrant water flower" and signifies "dignity and indestructible love for family and homeland." Sui Sin Far began her writing career in Montreal but later moved on to a variety of urban centers with large Chinese immigrant communities. Over the course of her career, she lived in eastern and western Canada, Jamaica, California,



[6169] Anonymous, *Chinatown, New York City* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-72475].

SUI SIN FAR WEB ARCHIVE

[1111] Anonymous, *In the Heart of Chinatown, San Francisco, U.S.A.* (1892), courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Memory.

Thousands of Chinese immigrants were hired to work on the transcontinental railroad and were often given the most dangerous jobs. While discrimination, biased immigration policies, and other hardships limited the rights of Chinese Americans well into the twentieth century, they nevertheless established vibrant communities which preserved many of their traditional ways, such as Chinatown in San Francisco. Cathy Song's poem "Chinatown" depicts her view of this neighborhood. Early examples of Chinese American literature include the poems from *Angel Island* and the works of Sui Sin Far.

[6164] Arnold Genthe, *Street of the Gamblers (By Day)* (1898), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-3890]. Photograph of pedestrians in

the Pacific Northwest, and Boston. In both her fiction and her journalism she worked to make the lives of Chinese immigrants understandable and sympathetic to a white audience, often highlighting the home life and domestic occupations of her Chinese women characters. Her presentation of Chinese characters who shared many of the same joys and concerns as European Americans was part of her ongoing effort to combat stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as "heathen," unclean, and untrustworthy. But even as Sui Sin Far dwelt on the similarities between Chinese and European Americans, she also used her stories and articles to document traditional Chinese customs and to provide her readers with insight into the unique culture that had developed in America's Chinatowns.

Sui Sin Far published nearly forty short stories and more than thirty articles about Chinese life in prominent national magazines. Near the end of her life she published two autobiographical accounts and collected some of her stories into a full-length book, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, which was well received by critics. When she died in Montreal, the Chinese community there erected a memorial to her inscribed with the characters "Yi bu wong hua," which translates as "The righteous one does not forget her country."

TEACHING TIPS

■ The original 1912 edition of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* was published with an elaborate scarlet cover and "oriental" motifs inscribed on each page. Ask your students to consider the effects of this physical presentation, and why Sui Sin Far's book was bound this way. Why might the elaborate, ostentatiously Chinese-looking design have appealed to the white audience to whom the book was marketed? Ask your students to discuss how the experience of reading "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" might change if they read it in the original edition rather than in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

■ Although Japan had been open to the West since 1853, "the Orient" remained a place of great mystery, reverence, and intrigue for modern Americans. Readers revelled in the exotic paraphernalia of Japanese daily life in works such as Matthew Calbraith Perry's *The Americans in Japan: An Abridgement of the Government Narrative of the U.S. Expedition to Japan*, and fascination with the Orient spilled over into U.S. architecture and literature, particularly in the poetry of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams (see the Core Context on "Orientalism" in Unit 10). Postcolonial theorist Edward Said has argued that for Westerners the Orient was "almost a European invention": the Orient becomes an "other" against which the West defines itself, rather than a place with its own reality. Have your students test whether Sui Sin Far's fiction breaks down or reinforces this "otherness" by having them diagram what constitutes Western and Chinese culture and identity in Sui Sin Far's work.

■ At one point in the story, Mrs. Spring Fragrance recites lines

from “a beautiful American poem” by a “noble American named Tennyson.” Of course, Tennyson, the poet laureate of Great Britain, was not an American. Ask your students to think about the function of this mention of Tennyson in the story (Mr. Spring Fragrance crucially misunderstands the meaning of the lines and becomes suspicious of his wife’s affection and fidelity). Is the joke here on Mrs. Spring Fragrance for mistaking a British poem for an American one? Or is this a commentary on the state of American poetry and American literature generally? How does Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s conflation of British and American culture compare to many Americans’ inability to distinguish among various Asian cultures?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In what ways is Mrs. Spring Fragrance “Americanized”? What traditional Chinese values and customs does she retain?

Context: How does Sui Sin Far portray Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s domestic activities and home life? How do her relationships with her neighbors and her husband compare to European American norms? How does Sui Sin Far’s description of Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s attachment to her home compare to Anzia Yeziarska’s portrait of Hanneh Hayyeh’s joy in her kitchen?

Context: In “Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” Sui Sin Far twice alludes to Mr. Spring Fragrance’s brother, who has been detained in a “detention pen” at the Angel Island Immigration Center in San Francisco. Why does Sui Sin Far include these references to Mr. Spring Fragrance’s brother, who is, after all, not an actor in the story? How does his immigration experience complicate the tone and resolution of the story?

Exploration: How might Sui Sin Far’s work have influenced later Chinese American women writers, such as Amy Tan or Maxine Hong Kingston? Do these three authors deal with some of the same issues? How are Tan’s and Kingston’s concerns different from Sui Sin Far’s?

Exploration: Could Sui Sin Far be considered a “regional realist,” like the writers featured in Unit 8? Why or why not?

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963)

With the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois emerged as the intellectual leader of a new generation of African American activists who broke with the leadership and views of Booker T. Washington. Declaring that blacks should no longer accept second-class citizenship and should instead fight for suffrage, civil equality, and the right to education, Du Bois sent out what at the time was a revolutionary call for change in the racial status quo. In doing so, he became simultaneously one of the most influential and controversial black people in America.

San Francisco’s Chinatown. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) combatted stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as heathen, unclean, and untrustworthy and provided insight into the culture of America’s Chinatowns.

[6169] Anonymous, *Chinatown, New York City* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-72475].

Chinese immigrants brought their traditions and customs to America, where they established strong communities to provide familiar support in an otherwise unfamiliar world. Author Maxine Hong Kingston has written personal and deeply reflective portraits of Chinese immigrants’ experiences.

[6171] Arnold Genthe, *Children Were the Pride, Joy, Beauty, and Chief Delight of the Quarter, Chinatown, San Francisco* (c. 1896–1906), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-5265]. Four children in traditional Chinese clothing on a sidewalk in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Writing about the time this photograph was taken, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) sought to make the lives of Chinese immigrants understandable to white audiences.

[8183] Anonymous, *The Voyage, No. 8* (c. 1920), reprinted in *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*, courtesy of the University of Washington Press. “How has anyone to know that my dwelling place would be a prison?” asks this poem, one of many written on the walls of the Angel Island Immigration Center by Chinese immigrants held there by U.S. authorities. Examples of these poems, which play a role in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*, can be found in the archive, [8184] through [8191].

Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Du Bois grew up far from the strife and racial divisions of the American South. Though he experienced discrimination as a child, it was not until he went south to attend Fisk University that he saw what he called “a world split into white and black halves, where the darker half was held back by race prejudice and legal bonds.” Moved by the situation that he saw in the South, he decided to devote his life to fighting against racial prejudice and effecting legal and social change for blacks in America. After graduating from Fisk, Du Bois went on to receive an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard and to pursue advanced study in the emerging field of sociology at the University of Berlin.

When he returned to the United States in 1894, Du Bois found that in spite of his impressive academic record he could not get a permanent position at a major research university because of his race. Instead, he took a position teaching subjects outside his areas of interest at Wilberforce, a small all-black college in Ohio. In 1897 he left Wilberforce to take a temporary position at the University of Pennsylvania and later a permanent position at Atlanta University, where he conducted systematic, sociological studies of what was then termed “the Negro problem.” But Du Bois’s faith in the importance and efficacy of objective scientific inquiry was shaken by horrifying incidents of racial violence in the Reconstruction-era South. As he later put it, “one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist, while Negroes were being lynched, murdered, and starved.” By the turn of the century, Du Bois had concluded that his scholarly studies were doing little to change the reality of everyday life for African Americans. Accordingly, he committed himself to more public political action.

OPPOSE “BIRTH OF NATION.”

Washington, D. C.—Officials of the N. A. A. C. P. say they will resist to the utmost any effort on the part of the managers here to show “The Birth of a Nation,” which it is said is headed this way. With a failure to suppress the film in Boston, New York, Chicago, Atlantic City and Philadelphia, the lawyers in this city are dubious about the course that should be taken to keep the vile production out of Washington. No objection was raised to “The Nigger,” which was played here to such large audiences that it had to make a return engagement. It was shown also at the Howard to overflowing audiences. “The Nigger” had redeeming traits, but the second part of “The Birth of a Nation” is a libel upon a struggling race that was in no wise responsible for the sad conditions growing out of reconstruction days. It may be that the managers will listen to the appeal of the Colored people that they refuse to allow the film (or filth) to be shown in any of the local houses.

[5719] *Cleveland Advocate*, Article: Oppose “Birth of a Nation” (1915), courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.

One of Du Bois’s first acts in his new role was to offer a strong critique of Booker T. Washington’s position on African American rights. Espousing what often sounded like an acceptance of disenfranchisement, segregation, and second-class citizenship in exchange for low-level economic opportunities, Washington was popular with white audiences and had come to be regarded as the undisputed leader of the African American community. Although Du Bois had previously supported Washington’s conciliatory philosophy, in *The Souls of Black Folk* he modified his position: “so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North and South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds . . . we must unceasingly and firmly oppose [him].” Du Bois’s shift from supporting to challenging Washington was typical of what would become a pattern in his career: he changed his mind or modified his views on so many different topics and issues that his ideology can be difficult to characterize.

In 1905 Du Bois joined with other critics of Washington to form the first all-black protest movement in American history, the Niagara Movement, which was dedicated to direct action to end racial discrimination. By 1910, the Niagara Movement was folded into a new organization, the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People. Du Bois was recruited to serve as the NAACP's director of publicity and research and was for many years the only African American among the organization's leadership. In this position, Du Bois edited the association's official magazine, *Crisis*, and reached an enormous audience with his message of civil equality and educational opportunity.

Increasingly radical in his views and at odds with the leadership of the NAACP, Du Bois was forced to resign as editor of *Crisis* in 1934. He then began to focus his energies on working for broader, worldwide race reform and international understanding, leading a series of Pan-African conferences, working with the United Nations, and serving as chairman of the Peace Information Center. Du Bois eventually became convinced that communism offered the greatest hope for racial equality and world peace, a position that made him extremely controversial and alienated him from many more mainstream African American organizations. In 1961 he joined the Communist party and left the United States to live in Ghana, where he died at the age of ninety-five. Throughout his long career, Du Bois was an untiring champion of both African American and human rights in the United States and around the world.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Du Bois's articulation of "double-consciousness" and the "twoness" of African Americans is one of the most famous passages in *The Souls of Black Folk*. You might begin your discussion of Du Bois by focusing on this passage, which appears early in Chapter 1, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." Ask your students to think about Du Bois's claims that double-consciousness is both a gift (it enables a "second-sight" into American culture) and a curse (it denies African American individuals "true self-consciousness"). According to Du Bois, what kinds of stresses and tensions does double-consciousness create for African Americans? How can these tensions be resolved? Ask students to consider how Du Bois's formulation of double-consciousness impacted later twentieth-century artists interested in recording the experiences of racial minorities (Toni Morrison's and Ralph Ellison's work might lend themselves well to this discussion).

■ Divide your class into two groups and have them prepare a mock debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Ask them to imagine that the two leaders are meeting to formulate a platform of goals for the African American community at the turn of the twentieth century. What strategies would each leader advocate? How would they prioritize their goals? Ask each group to anticipate arguments and to be prepared to defend their strategies in the context of the historical circumstances of early-twentieth-century America.

[4801] Arthur Rothstein, *Sharecropper's Children* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-025464-D]. Photograph of three African American children on a porch. Landowners rarely kept sharecroppers' homes in good condition. Du Bois hoped that an educated "Talented Tenth" of African Americans would help lift such children out of poverty.

[5719] *Cleveland Advocate*, *Oppose "Birth of a Nation"* (1915), courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society. Civil rights groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized protests against D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. The film glorified the Ku Klux Klan and helped the organization gain new strength.

[7102] J. E. Purdy, W. E. B. Du Bois (1904), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-28485]. Taken a year after the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, this portrait shows Du Bois as a refined and serious intellectual. In his lifetime Du Bois led the NAACP and championed the cause of African American advancement through education.

[7132] Anonymous, *Steal Away to Jesus* (n.d.), courtesy of John W. Work's *Folk Songs of the American Negro* (1907), Fisk University. These lyrics remind listeners that those who obey the divine Lord are assured ultimate salvation, while unredeemed sinners, whether slaves or masters, have cause to tremble. This song could also refer to "stealing away" to forbidden worship meetings, or it could be an Underground Railroad code.

Comprehension: What criticisms of Booker T. Washington does Du Bois offer in Chapter 3, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others"? On what points does he agree with Washington? On what issues does he disagree? How are his strategies for strengthening the African American community different from Washington's?

Comprehension: What does Du Bois mean when he talks about the "double-consciousness" and "two-ness" of African American identity?

Context: Du Bois repeatedly calls for African Americans to work toward attaining "self-conscious manhood" and complains that Booker T. Washington's policies are "emasculating" and in opposition to "true manhood." What is the role of masculinity and manhood in Du Bois's theories about racial struggle? How does his equation of racial strength and self-consciousness with masculinity compare to the depictions of minority women's struggles for strength and self-consciousness in works by writers such as Anzia Yezierska or Sui Sin Far?

Exploration: Like Du Bois, Frederick Douglass found himself "stirred" and "moved" by the haunting strains of the Sorrow Songs. How does Douglass's account of his relationship to the Sorrow Songs in Chapter 2 of his *Narrative* compare to Du Bois's discussion of the songs in Chapter 14, "The Sorrow Songs"?

Exploration: How do you think Du Bois's work and philosophy might have influenced later African American protest movements? You might think about Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Power movement.

Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945)

One of the foremost practitioners of American realism, Theodore Dreiser wrote novels and stories that explored such themes as the dangerous lure of urban environments, the conflict between Old World parents and their Americanized children, and the hollowness of the American drive for material success. Dreiser's own life provided him with many of the experiences and concerns that he later translated into his fiction. He was born into a large, impoverished family in Terre Haute, Indiana. His father, a German immigrant, tried to make his children conform to strict Old World values and dogmatic Catholicism, but Dreiser and most of his siblings rebelled. At fifteen Dreiser left home and took a series of odd jobs in Chicago. After spending a year in college through the help and support of a generous teacher, he became a journalist and wrote for newspapers in Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh.

By 1899 Dreiser was settled in New York, editing a magazine and selling his freelance writing. With the encouragement of his friends he decided to try his hand at a novel, to be based on the life of one of his sisters. The result, *Sister Carrie*, was published in 1900,

but received neither critical attention nor praise. True to his interest in uncompromising realism, Dreiser had written a novel that portrayed characters who broke the bounds of respectability and engaged in illicit behavior without remorse or repercussions. Shocked by the book's controversial themes and worried about public opinion, the publisher refused to promote it and it sold poorly. Dreiser's disagreement with his publisher and his refusal to alter his novel marked the beginning of what would become a lasting commitment to resisting Victorian prudery and narrowness.

After his difficulties with *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser suffered a nervous breakdown and then opted to return to his career in journalism. He produced no new fiction for almost seven years. Then, in 1910, he lost his position as editor of a leading women's magazine and took his dismissal as an opportunity to return to fiction writing. The next fifteen years constituted a period of extraordinary productivity for Dreiser, leading to the publication of four novels, four works of travel narrative and autobiography, and numerous short stories and sketches. He published what many critics consider to be his masterpiece, *An American Tragedy*, in 1925. Based on an actual murder case in upstate New York, the book was hailed as a great American novel and generated substantial profits. With his reputation and finances secure, Dreiser's productivity dropped off; he completed no other novels until almost the end of his life.

Like many American intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s, Dreiser was fascinated with socialism and the political experiment going on in the new Soviet Union. In 1927 he paid a lengthy visit to Moscow. Upon his return to the United States, he devoted himself to furthering proletarian causes and the Communist party. When he died in 1945 in California, his reputation as a writer and thinker was at low, but later critics have largely revived his standing as an innovative author who defied genteel and romantic traditions to offer realistic portraits of human nature and social conditions in America.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask your students to pay attention to Dreiser's use of regional dialects in "Old Rogaum and His Theresa." Which characters speak in dialect? How does Theresa's language separate her from her father? How does Connie Almering talk? What conclusions are we supposed to draw from each character's different way of speaking? You might ask students to compare Dreiser's use of dialect to some of the "regional realist" writers featured in Unit 8.

■ As many critics have noted, the conclusion of "Old Rogaum and His Theresa," though not tragic, is not exactly a happy one. Readers



[7110] H. C. White Co., *Making Link Sausages—Machines Stuff 10 Ft. per Second* (c. 1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50217].

DREISER WEB ARCHIVE

[5126] Lewis Wickes Hines, *Rear View of Tenement, 134 1/2 Thompson St., New York City* (1912), courtesy of the Library of Congress, National Child Labor Committee Collection [LC-USZ62-93116]. Photograph of the back of a tenement housing-complex in New York City. Like writer Theodore Dreiser, photographer Lewis Wickes Hines documented social conditions in America at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[5967] Carl Van Vechten, *Portrait of Theodore Dreiser* (1933), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-42486]. Writer Theodore Dreiser, late in life. A practitioner of American realism, Dreiser explored such themes as the lure of urban environments, the conflict between Old World parents and their Americanized children, and the hollowness of the American drive for material success.

[7110] H. C. White Co., *Making Link Sausages—Machines Stuff 10 Ft. per Second* (c. 1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50217]. Photograph of Swift and Company's packing house in Chicago. Mechanization and urbanization encouraged some writers' nostalgia for the United States's agricultural past.

[8084] Jerome Myers, *In Lower New York* (1926), courtesy of the Portland Art Museum, bequest of Winslow B. Ayers. At the turn of the century, the Lower East Side of New York City was home to some of the nation's poorest people, the vast majority of whom were European immigrants struggling to eke out a living on America's "golden shores."

are left with the uneasy feeling that the Rogaum family's disputes are not over. While both Theresa and her father are glad that she has safely returned to her home, the girl's desires still seem to be in conflict with her father's Old World ideas about proper conduct. After discussing the lack of resolution in the ending of the story, ask your students to write a sequel to "Old Rogaum and His Theresa" in which they speculate on how Theresa and her father will get along while she continues to live at home.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In "Old Rogaum and His Theresa," what attracts Theresa to the streets? Why is she reluctant to return to her home when her father calls her?

Context: What kind of neighborhood do the Rogaums live in? Does Dreiser give readers an idea about the different ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes that inhabit the neighborhood? How do you think the community compares to some of the New York neighborhoods whose pictures are featured in the archive?

Context: In "The Art of Fiction," Henry James claims that writers have a responsibility to represent "the strange irregular rhythm of life" rather than organized morality lessons, pat conclusions, or happy endings. How do you think James would have responded to "Old Rogaum and His Theresa"? Does it meet his criteria for good fiction? Why or why not?

Exploration: Much of the drama of "Old Rogaum and His Theresa" centers on the problem of female chastity. Theresa's exposure to the unscrupulous Connie Almering and the elder Rogaums' encounter with the suicidal prostitute thematize the potential for young women to "go astray" in an urban setting like New York. Why does Dreiser focus on this issue? Does he seem to draw any conclusions? How does his portrait of young women's desires and temptations compare to earlier American treatments of the same subject (Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, for example?)

Henry Adams (1838–1918)

From his early childhood on, Henry Adams was acutely aware of his heritage as part of the remarkable political dynasty of the Adams family. Both his great-grandfather and his grandfather had served as President of the United States, and his father, Charles Francis Adams, was a congressman and a diplomat. But while Henry Adams maintained a lively interest in politics and moved in powerful social circles in Washington, D.C., all his life, he found his true calling—and lasting fame—as a writer and a historian. Noted in his own time for his essays, biographies, novels, and histories, today Adams owes his reputation primarily to *The Education of Henry Adams*, his unique autobiographical study of the forces that shaped his own life and nineteenth-century America more generally.

Born in Boston, Adams grew up steeped in the traditions of his family and surrounded by some of the most influential politicians and thinkers of the day. He attended college at Harvard, traveled around Europe after his graduation, and then settled in Germany to study civil law and history. In 1860 he received the traditional family call to political service and took up a post as his father's private secretary in Washington, D.C. When President Lincoln named Adams's father, Charles Francis Adams, as his minister in Great Britain in 1861, Henry Adams relocated to London to serve as part of the diplomatic legation. He thus spent the entire Civil War period in England. He learned a great deal about international politics in the process but was constantly troubled by the feeling that he was missing out on participating in the most significant American event of his lifetime. Perhaps in an effort to involve himself in the political and cultural life of his own country, Adams took time away from his diplomatic work to write ambitious essays and reviews that were published in important American journals.

Returning to Washington in 1868, Adams devoted himself to a journalistic career, composing serious political pieces intended to expose corruption and encourage social and economic reform. Corruption and graft dominated American business and politics during President Grant's administration, however, and Adams was soon disillusioned by his failure to achieve real results. In 1870 he left Washington to serve as a professor of history at Harvard and as editor of the prestigious journal *The North American Review*. While at Harvard he introduced academic practices borrowed from German universities, such as the study of primary documentary sources and the use of seminar-style teaching.

Adams made a career change once again in the late 1870s, resigning his positions in Boston and returning to Washington to concentrate on historical research and writing. He published two historical biographies and the critically acclaimed nine-volume *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*. This thorough study mixes diplomatic, social, and intellectual history in its examination of early-nineteenth-century America and is still regarded as a formative piece of historical analysis on the period. While he was at work on the *History* Adams also found time to experiment with novel writing, publishing two works of fiction, *Democracy* and *Esther*, in 1880 and 1884, respectively.

In 1885 Adams's life was shattered when his beloved wife, Marian, committed suicide. He never fully recovered, but in the tradition of his family, refused to give in to grief and pushed on with his research and writing. In the final decades of his life, Adams traveled again to Europe. While in France he was struck by the magnificence and harmonious beauty of the medieval cathedrals he visited, particularly at Chartres. The experience moved him to write *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, a study of medieval architecture and of the spiritual force that energized medieval culture. He developed a theory that



[7663] J. Alexander, *Cookie's Row*, Villa No. 3 (1968), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [HABS, DC, GEO, 105-,DLC/PP-00:DC-2].

medieval society had been unified by the spiritual power of the feminine force of the Virgin, while modern society had sacrificed this unity in its devotion to the chaotic forces of science and technology. His next book, *The Education of Henry Adams*, served as a corollary to *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* in that it traced the disorder of the modern world by recounting what Adams thought of as his own “mis-education” and sense of uncertainty and failure. By figuring himself as a displaced eighteenth-century soul, unable to make proper use of his impulses toward harmony and civic virtue in the modern chaotic world, Adams eloquently articulated the plight and frustration of the modern American subject. Although both *Mont-Saint-Michel* and *The Education of Henry Adams* were originally printed privately and intended only for Adams’s friends, they soon generated wide interest. *The Education of Henry Adams* was published and released to the public in 1918 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1919, a year after its author’s death.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students often comment on the strangeness of Adams’s use of the third person in a work in which he himself is the subject. Ask them to think about why Adams might have chosen this more detached way of writing his autobiography, and about what effect the third person narration has on the reader’s understanding of Adams as a character. You might ask students to write a journal entry about an incident from their own lives in the third person. Have them discuss the experience of writing about themselves in this way. What difficulties did they encounter? How did the use of the third person change their relationship to their own history?

■ Perhaps because Adams found his wife’s suicide so devastating, he is completely silent about the event as he narrates his life. In fact, he never even mentions that he was married. Ask students what effect this absence has on the autobiography and how the knowledge of Adams’s personal tragedy changes their understanding of him. You might have them examine the chapter entitled “Chaos,” in which Adams vividly describes his reaction to his sister’s tragic death. Might this episode be a displaced description of his reaction to his wife’s suicide? How does this encounter with death affect Adams? What conclusions does he draw about life from this experience?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Adams sees the Virgin and the Dynamo as important symbols of their respected ages. What does the Virgin represent? What does the Dynamo represent? What conflict does Adams see between them?

Context: In 1870 Adams wrote an article entitled “The New York Gold Conspiracies,” detailing the scandalous behavior of men like Jay Gould, who bankrupted the Erie Railroad through corporate mismanagement and became involved in a plot to corner the gold

market. To Adams's surprise, the article was refused by the English periodicals *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Quarterly*. He was outraged by the power corrupt American businessmen, politicians, and corporations exerted over the free press, even in England: "One knew that the power of Erie was almost as great in England as in America, but one was hardly prepared to find it controlling the *Quarterlies*." How does the corporate culture created by the **robber barons** affect Adams? How does he respond to it in his memoir?

Context: What does Adams mean when he claims in his chapter "The Dynamo and the Virgin" that "The Woman had once been supreme" but that "an American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist"? What kind of role did women occupy in America in the late nineteenth century, according to Adams? What kind of critique of sexual politics does he offer in this chapter? How does Adams's view of the limits of the American woman compare to Sarah Piatt's or Edith Wharton's views?

Exploration: How does Adams's autobiography compare to Benjamin Franklin's autobiography? What concerns do these two writers have in common? What values do they share? How do their attitudes toward spirituality and science compare? What makes the outcome of their lives, and their view of America's future, so different from one another?

Anzia Yeziarska (c. 1880–1970)

In the course of a career that spanned more than fifty years, Anzia Yeziarska recorded Eastern European women immigrants' struggles to find a place for themselves both within their traditional Jewish culture and within American society. Yeziarska's goal as an author involved articulating Jewish women's experiences to a larger audience: she hoped her writing would "build a bridge of understanding between the American-born and myself."

Born in Plinsk, a Jewish shtetl outside Warsaw, Poland, Yeziarska immigrated to New York with her large family when she was about fifteen years old. Settling in a tenement on the Lower East Side, the family attempted to live according to Old World values: Yeziarska's father pursued Talmudic scholarship, his sons received an education, and his wife and daughters earned money to support the family. Like her mother and sisters Yeziarska worked in sweatshops and as a domestic servant, but eventually she determined to rebel against her father's patriarchal values. In 1899 she left home to support herself and get an education.

In her pursuit of independence, Yeziarska took a room on her own at the Clara de Hirsch Settlement House. A charitable institution created to help Jewish immigrant working women live on their own, the settlement house attempted to "Americanize" its tenants by replacing their traditional customs and values with those of European American culture. Thus, when the patrons of the Clara de

[7482] Irving Underhill, *Bankers Trust & Stock Exchange Buildings* (1912), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-126718]. During the aptly named "Gilded Age," the richest 1 percent of households held more than 45 percent of the total national wealth, a percent unequaled to this day, although the past twenty years have seen a greater overall widening of the gap between the richest and poorest people in the United States.

[7659] Anonymous, *Henry Adams Portrait* (1912), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-116560]. Adams maintained a lifelong interest in politics and moved in powerful social circles in Washington, DC. He found his true calling, however, as a writer and a historian.

[7663] J. Alexander, *Cookie's Row, Villa No. 3* (1968), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [HABS, DC, GEO, 105-, DLC/PP-00:DC-2]. Photograph of the entryway and front room of a mansion on Cookie's Row in Washington, DC. This is an example of the formal Victorian mansions occupied by wealthy residents of the nation's capital at the turn of the twentieth century.

[7664] Anonymous, *Potomac Aqueduct ca. 1865*, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [HABS, DC, GEO, 1-14]. Photograph of two men talking beside the Potomac River, with the Potomac Aqueduct in the distance. The aqueduct bridge allowed canal boats to travel to Alexandria without having to unload their cargo onto ships to cross the Potomac. It was one of America's earliest engineering triumphs.

Hirsch house awarded Yeziarska a scholarship to attend Columbia University, they stipulated that she had to study domestic science so she could learn the skills of a middle-class American housewife. Although Yeziarska had little interest in domestic science, she used the opportunity to gain an education at Columbia.

After finishing her program, Yeziarska briefly taught domestic science, then attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, where she studied acting and became involved in radical socialist circles. She also began writing stories about the experiences of Eastern European immigrants, focusing on the specific challenges faced by women. Although her stories were repeatedly rejected by prominent magazines and journals, Yeziarska persisted. Around this time, she began using her given name of Anzia Yeziarska rather than “Hattie Mayer,” the name immigration authorities at Ellis Island had given her because it was easier for most European Americans to pronounce.

In 1910, Yeziarska married attorney Jacob Gordon and annulled the marriage almost immediately. She then married businessman Arnold Levitas, with whom she had a daughter, Louise, in 1912. Yeziarska soon found herself stifled by the demands of domestic life, and the couple had frequent disagreements. In 1915 she left her husband and moved to California to raise her daughter alone, but soon found this plan untenable. She returned to New York, gave custody of her daughter to her former husband, and decided to live on her own as a writer. She found support for her work in her friendship with John Dewey, a Columbia professor and a respected authority on education. Although Yeziarska and Dewey were passionately devoted to one another and may have shared romantic feelings, their relationship apparently went unconsummated. His interest in and encouragement of her writing, however, proved inspirational for Yeziarska.

Although she had successfully published two stories in 1915, Yeziarska did not achieve real fame or critical recognition until 1919, when her story “The Fat of the Land” was awarded a prize as the best story of the year. This success enabled the publication of her first book-length collection, *Hungry Hearts*, in 1920. Yeziarska’s work attracted the attention of movie producer Samuel Goldwyn, who bought the rights to her stories and gave her a contract to write screenplays in Hollywood.

In California, her sudden rise to fame and fortune earned her the moniker “sweatshop Cinderella.” Although Yeziarska’s own semi-autobiographical work had contributed to this rags-to-riches image, she found herself uncomfortable with being touted as an example of the American Dream. Frustrated by the shallowness of Hollywood and by her own alienation from her roots, Yeziarska returned to New York in the mid-1920s and continued publishing novels and stories about immigrant women struggling to establish their identities in America. Although she wrote and published well into her old age, Yeziarska found little success as American readers became less inter-



[5088] Anonymous, *Anzia Yeziarska after the Birth of Her Child* (c. 1912), courtesy of Melvin Henriksen.

ested in the immigrant experience. She died in poverty in a nursing home in California. Only recently has her critical reputation been rehabilitated by scholars interested in feminism and ethnic identity.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Yeziarska was often praised for the authenticity of her representations of Yiddish-English immigrant speech. In order to appreciate her skill at reproducing dialect and “translating” the cadence and rhythm of Yiddish speech, ask your students to read some of the dialogue from “The Lost ‘Beautifulness’” out loud. (The verbal exchanges when Hannah Hayyeh convinces the butcher and his customers to view her newly painted kitchen might work particularly well for this activity.) How does this speech sound different from “mainstream” American English speech? How are the vocabulary and sentence structure different? What effect does the use of dialect have on our understanding of the characters in the story? A footnote to the story in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* explains that Yeziarska probably intended readers to understand that the characters would actually be speaking Yiddish to one another and that she has translated their speech into English. Ask students to think about the implications of this assertion. If Yeziarska was intent on translating Yiddish speech, why did she retain the unique idioms and rhythms of the language rather than render it in standard American English?

■ Many of Yeziarska’s works offer critiques of the hypocrisy or short-sightedness of charitable institutions and individuals. Her own experiences with charitable settlement houses and scholarships designed to enforce immigrant assimilation had convinced her that charity often leaves its recipients feeling imprisoned and disempowered. After giving students this background information, ask them to think about the figure of Mrs. Preston in “The Lost ‘Beautifulness.’” Why does Hannah Hayyeh grow disenchanted with Mrs. Preston’s patronage? You might point out Mrs. Preston’s rather condescending contention that Hannah Hayyeh is an “artist of laundry” and her reluctance to change the status quo of class relations. (She insists, “We can’t change the order of things overnight” and “We’re doing our best.”) Ask students how they think Yeziarska intended readers to react to Mrs. Preston. Are we meant to think of her as a bad person? Or as someone who means well but is misguided? Is her character meant to offer a model or a lesson to readers who wish to offer charity to immigrants?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What motivates Hannah Hayyeh to paint her kitchen white? What sacrifices does she make in order to perform this improvement?

Comprehension: Why does Hannah Hayyeh refuse Mrs. Preston’s

YEZIARSKA WEB ARCHIVE

[4716] Anonymous, *Anzia Yeziarska at Typewriter* (n.d.), courtesy of the *New York Daily News*. After rising to prominence when Hollywood purchased the rights to *Hungry Hearts*, Anzia Yeziarska refused to succumb to her image as a “Sweatshop Cinderella.” Instead she returned to New York and continued writing about the experiences of immigrant women.

[5023] Detroit Publishing Company, *Mulberry Street, New York City* (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-1584]. New York City received huge numbers of immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. In the bustling streets of the Lower East Side, Old World met New in a population that ranged from Eastern European and Russian Jews to Irish Catholics.

[5088] Anonymous, *Anzia Yeziarska after the Birth of Her Child* (c. 1912), courtesy of Melvin Henriksen. Fiction writer Anzia Yeziarska divorced twice and gave birth to one daughter. She developed a friendship with John Dewey, who was a lifelong proponent of educational reform and one of the most renowned philosophers of the twentieth century.

[5124] T. De Thulstrup, *Home of the Poor* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75197]. This illustration shows an interior view of a crowded New York City tenement. The living conditions of the city’s poor at the turn of the twentieth century eventually sparked a wave of social reform.

[5126] Lewis Wickes Hines, *Rear View of Tenement, 134 1/2 Thompson St., New York City* (1912), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, National Child Labor Committee Collection [LC-USZ62-93116]. Photograph of the back of a tenement housing-complex in New York City. Like writer Theodore Dreiser, photographer Lewis Wickes Hines documented social conditions in America at the beginning of the twentieth century.

offer to give her money to cover the rent increase? How does the scene in which Hannah Hayyeh refuses Mrs. Preston's charity change their relationship?

Context: Examine the pictures of Lower East Side tenements featured in the archive. How do the pictures compare to Yeziarska's description of Hannah Hayyeh's apartment? Given the tenement environment, why might Hannah Hayyeh's quest for "beautiful-ness" make such an impression on her neighbors and on Mrs. Preston?

Exploration: While she was studying at Columbia and the Academy of Dramatic Arts, Yeziarska became interested in Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance. How do ideals of self-reliance inflect Yeziarska's portrait of Hannah Hayyeh? In what ways might "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" critique Emerson's ideas about self-creation and personal responsibility? What were the limits of self-reliance for an impoverished immigrant woman at the turn of the twentieth century?

Suggested Author Pairings

HENRY JAMES, EDITH WHARTON, AND THEODORE DREISER

James, Wharton, and Dreiser are all considered masters of realist fiction. The short stories in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* demonstrate the authors' ability to construct psychologically complex characters as they explore the tension between old and new customs and manners. While James and Wharton focus on wealthy, aristocratic, or *nouveau riche* Americans at home or abroad, Dreiser attends to the immigrant and working-class experience in urban America. These authors also share an awareness of the social constraints that women faced in turn-of-the-century America, though they each had different perspectives on the nature and impact of those constraints.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND W. E. B. DU BOIS

Washington and Du Bois make a natural pairing since they were associates and rivals. Washington's pragmatic, somewhat accommodationist approach to race relations makes a provocative contrast to the more uncompromising position Du Bois eventually adopted. Their opposed views on black education, in particular, make for revealing comparisons. Washington's and Du Bois's texts represent different stages in the struggle for African American rights, and reading them in tandem allows students to begin to gauge the evolution of the movement.

**ABRAHAM CAHAN, ANZIA YEZIERSKA, AND
SUI SIN FAR (EDITH MAUD EATON)**

While Cahan and Yezierska chronicled the experiences of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in New York, Sui Sin Far explored the stories of Chinese immigrants living in Chinatowns along the West Coast. Despite the enormous cultural (and geographical) differences between these immigrant groups, they both had to deal with exploitation, prejudice, and the tensions caused by the process of “Americanization.” Sui Sin Far and Yezierska both offer poignant—and at times ironic—examinations of immigrant women’s relationship to bourgeois domesticity.

SARAH MORGAN BRYAN PIATT AND HENRY ADAMS

While Piatt’s complex poems and Adams’s elegant prose autobiography have little in common on the level of genre, these texts share a self-consciousness about—and willingness to experiment with—the formal possibilities of voice. Writing his autobiography in the third person, Adams almost seems to dissociate himself from this record of his own life in an effort to lend objectivity to its telling. Piatt adopts a different strategy, employing multiple voices and dialogue in her poetry rather than relying on a conventional single lyric voice. These writers’ experiments with voice seem at some level intended to infuse their work with realism.

CORE CONTEXTS

The Gospel of Wealth: Robber Barons and the Rise of Monopoly Capitalism

John D. Rockefeller, the leader of the oil industry and the wealthiest man in the world in his day, once articulated his beliefs about money and power this way: “I believe the power to make money is a gift of God . . . to be developed and used to the best of our ability for the good of mankind. Having been endowed with the gift I possess, I believe it is my duty to make money and still more money, and to use the money I make for the good of my fellow man according to the dictates of my conscience.” In justifying his incredible fortune in this way, Rockefeller expressed the ideology of “the gospel of wealth,” a term coined by steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie. According to the gospel of wealth, unrestrained capitalism will reward the best and most virtuous people, who will then use their fortune to benefit all of society. The duty of the virtuous industrialist, then, is to seek as much profit as possible by whatever means necessary.

While not everyone agreed that big business unfettered by government regulations was a good idea, or that it benefited the right people, no one could deny that by the end of the nineteenth century a new class of financiers with unprecedented power and wealth had



[2855] Lewis W. Hine, *View of the Ewen Breaker of the Pennsylvania Coal Co.* (1911), courtesy of the Still Picture Branch, National Archives and Records Administration.

"THE GOSPEL OF WEALTH" WEB ARCHIVE

[2855] Lewis W. Hine, *View of the Ewen Breaker of the Pennsylvania Coal Co.* (1911), courtesy of the Still Picture Branch, National Archives and Records Administration. The thickness of the dust is visible in this photograph of children working for the Pennsylvania Coal Company. These children were often kicked or beaten by overseers.

[5749] John D. Rockefeller, *Address by J. D. Rockefeller, Jr.* (1920), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Rockefeller used his oil monopoly to become the richest man in the world during the first decade of the twentieth century. What he espoused as the "Gospel of Wealth" was criticized by others as the cruel and unfettered capitalism of "Robber Barons." Though Rockefeller donated huge sums to charity, many felt this inadequately redressed the damage done during his acquisition of wealth.

[7136] *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, *Boss Waving His Fist at Female Employee in a Sweatshop*

emerged in the United States. Industrialization had radically altered the character of the American economy by promoting the growth of giant corporations, **monopolies**, and **trusts** over the small businesses, shops, and farms that had formed the economic backbone of the prewar nation. These new corporations employed thousands of workers who were valued not for their artisanal skills but instead for their ability to perform menial tasks in factories and plants. Factory employment in the United States nearly doubled between 1850 and 1880. For many Americans, the growth of industrialism meant longer hours, unsatisfying working conditions, and a modest salary. But for a tiny minority, industrialism provided opportunities for extraordinary and unprecedented wealth.

In the economic climate of the late nineteenth century, some entrepreneurs were able to buy out or bankrupt all of their competitors to create monopolies. By 1900, a handful of men enjoyed virtually exclusive control over such important industries as steel, oil, banking, and railroads. Men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Jay Gould, and Leland Stanford developed innovative financial and management practices, centralizing control of their far-flung business interests through the use of trusts and holding companies. The men who ran the trusts made enormous profits and came to be regarded as aristocrats—to admirers, they were "princes of industry," while to critics, they were "robber barons." Many of these tycoons came from lowly or impoverished backgrounds and liked to remind people that they were examples of the fulfillment of the American Dream, in which a poor boy achieves success through hard work and virtue.

In accordance with the tenets of the gospel of wealth, many of these men gave tremendous sums of money to charity. They funded everything from churches to art museums to public swimming pools. Carnegie—who liked to call himself a "distributor of wealth"—by some calculations donated over 90 percent of his vast fortune to projects like the 2,811 libraries he founded in towns across the United States and all over the world. John D. Rockefeller gave lavishly to religious mission work, hospitals, schools, and countless other philanthropic organizations. Many of the industrialists endowed scholarship funds and universities, although ironically most of them did not have university degrees.

While the robber barons' philanthropic activities undoubtedly benefited countless people, some critics complained that their charitable works were motivated more by self-glorification and a desire for social acceptance than by a sincere desire to help the less fortunate. Other critics felt that no amount of charitable giving could outweigh the damage the robber barons caused with their unscrupulous business practices. They pointed out that these "captains of industry" were known for forcing their employees to labor in dangerous working conditions, paying poor wages, ruthlessly undermining fair competition, bribing politicians, and gouging consumers. Eventually, public outrage over monopolistic practices led to a call for the government to begin "trust-busting." In response, in 1890

Congress passed the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to punish corporations who engaged in “restraint of fair trade.” In its first decade, the act was more symbolic than effective. More lasting reforms came through the efforts of labor unions that organized workers and staged protests demanding fair treatment.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is a monopoly? What is a trust?

Comprehension: What is the “gospel of wealth”?

Context: Listen to the archive soundfile of John D. Rockefeller’s speech encouraging Americans to donate money to the war effort during World War I. What values and beliefs inform his lecture? How does he attempt to appeal to Americans?

Context: How does Henry Adams characterize industrialism in *The Education of Henry Adams*? Why is the Dynamo such an important symbol to him?

Context: Many of the authors featured in Unit 9 did not support unrestrained capitalism. W. E. B. Du Bois, Theodore Dreiser, Abraham Cahan, and Anzia Yezierska were all interested in socialist theories at some point in their careers. Why do you think socialism was so attractive to these social realists?

Exploration: What kinds of regulations has the government instituted to control large corporations since the days of the robber barons? Have “trustbusting” efforts succeeded? What effects has government regulation had on the U.S. economy?

Exploration: What responsibilities do wealthy people have to the rest of society?

Exploration: In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald portrayed Jay Gatsby as an extremely wealthy but lonely and dissatisfied man. Do you think Fitzgerald might have modeled Gatsby after the robber barons? How is Gatsby influenced by the gospel of wealth?

Making Amendments: The Woman Suffrage Movement

When American women go to the polls to cast their ballots in local and federal elections, most of them do not realize that it took dedicated generations of women almost seventy-five years of activism to ensure their right to vote. Most of the women who first began working for suffrage in 1848 did not live to see the Nineteenth Amendment ratified in 1920. The struggle for female enfranchisement was long and difficult, and the “suffragettes,” as suffrage activists were called, adopted many different strategies and tactics before reaching their goal.

The **woman suffrage** movement began at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, when a group led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton adopted a resolution calling for the right to vote. At the time, the idea of woman suffrage was so radical that many delegates at the convention refused to sign Stanton’s “Declaration of Sentiments,”

(1888), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-79589]. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw some gain great wealth at the expense of multitudes, like this mistreated worker. Eventually, inhumane working conditions became a cause for social reformers.

[7255] Alfred R. Waud, *Bessemer Steel Manufacture* (1876), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ6-1721].

One of six illustrations that appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* showing the operations in a steel mill. Steel was big business at the end of the nineteenth century, and, in the days before the income tax, so-called “robber barons” amassed extravagant wealth.



[5605] L. Prang & Co., *Representative Women* (1870), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-5535].



[2498] Currier & Ives, *The Age of Brass, or the Triumphs of Women's Rights* (1869), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-1921].

with its call for the enfranchisement of women, even though they supported her other goals of ensuring higher education and property rights for women. However radical the goal of enfranchisement had once seemed, after the Civil War it emerged as one of the most important women's issues when activists realized that the right to vote was necessary both to effect social and political change and to symbolize women's full status as equal citizens. Because the woman suffrage movement had begun in the same reform milieu as abolitionism, many activists were tremendously

disappointed when the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments extended suffrage to African American men but not to black or white women. The issue was so volatile that in 1869 the women's rights movement split over whether or not to support the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which guaranteed suffrage to black men.

One group of activists, led by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, opposed the Fifteenth Amendment, but called for a Sixteenth Amendment that would give women the right to vote. Their organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), viewed suffrage as only one of many important feminist causes on their agenda, and they were unafraid to adopt radical policies and rhetoric to forward their goals. For example, in 1872 Susan B. Anthony went to the polls and tried to vote, hoping to get arrested and thus attract attention for the movement. She was indeed arrested, found guilty of "knowingly, wrongfully, and unlawfully voting," and issued a fine. In contrast, NWSA's rival association, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe, was more moderate in its tone, promoted "partial suffrage" legislation, and worked to make feminist reforms appealing to mainstream Americans. AWSA supported the Fifteenth Amendment but vowed to continue working for woman suffrage.

Although they were no longer a united force, the suffrage organizations had made significant strides by the turn of the century. In the West, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho had all adopted woman suffrage by 1896. The suffrage movement also made gains through its alliance with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). A more mainstream and conservative organization than either NWSA or AWSA, the WCTU encouraged its large membership to support suffrage as a way of protecting traditional family and domestic values. In particular, they hoped that women voters would be able to pass legislation mandating the prohibition of alcohol. The association of woman suffrage with the temperance movement was both a boon and a hindrance to the effort to achieve enfranchisement. On one hand, the Christian temperance platform attracted a broader base of support and made suffrage seem less radical to mainstream women. But on the other hand, the WCTU endorsement of suffrage fueled big business's fears that women voters would threaten their interests by tilting the nation toward reform. The



[2506] Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*, *Woman Suffrage in Wyoming Territory. Scene at the Polls in Cheyenne* (1888), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-2235].

brewing and liquor industry, especially, came to perceive woman suffrage as a significant threat and threw its considerable political clout behind stifling the movement.

In 1890, the NWSA and the AWSA finally put their differences behind them and joined forces to make a concerted push for enfranchisement. The new, unified movement, known as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), focused its efforts almost exclusively on winning the vote rather than on other feminist issues. Their strategy involved building support within individual states and winning suffrage referendums on a state-by-state basis. They hoped that when enough states had adopted suffrage amendments, the federal government would at last agree to approve an amendment to the Constitution. In pursuit of this strategy, NAWSA opted to disassociate the suffrage movement from its traditional affiliation with the cause of African American civil rights. Many suffrage activists either shared the racist sentiments so prevalent in turn-of-the-century America or believed that they had to comply with racist views in order to make their cause appealing to a wide constituency. In any case, whether motivated by racism or a misguided sense of expediency, by the late nineteenth century the suffrage movement excluded black women from meaningful participation and refused to take a strong position in support of black women's equal right to enfranchisement.

In its final push for the vote, the suffragists adopted other new—and sometimes radical—strategies. They borrowed newly developed advertising techniques, circulating catchy jingles with pro-suffrage lyrics and distributing stationery and buttons emblazoned with pro-suffrage designs. To attract public attention, they held open-air meetings and rallies in busy urban areas. Suffragists sponsored elaborate parades featuring decorated floats, horses, music, and hundreds of marchers wearing colorful banners. A more militant wing of the suffrage movement, led by Alice Paul, developed more radical tactics, including picketing the White House, getting arrested, and going on hunger strikes. Perhaps the suffrage activists' most successful strategy involved aggressive lobbying among politicians. By targeting and converting individual politicians—including President Woodrow Wilson—suffragists eventually convinced Congress to adopt the Nineteenth Amendment by a narrow margin. The fight for ratification demanded unabated effort and political maneuverings, but finally, on August 21, 1920, the Tennessee legislature completed the ratification process. Their victory came by a very slim margin and after years of struggle, but the suffragists had finally won for American women the right to vote.

The suffrage movement both contributed to and reflected the growing independence of American women by the turn of the century. Women were acquiring education, working in the business world, and achieving economic and social self-sufficiency in greater numbers than ever before. Some women began wearing trousers, smoking, and asserting their sexual freedom. These “**new women**,” as such emancipated women were called, resisted the ideals of

“MAKING AMENDMENTS” WEB ARCHIVE

[2495] Anonymous, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Seated, and Susan B. Anthony, Standing, Three-Quarter-Length Portrait* (1880), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ61-791]. Stanton and Anthony were two of the foremost activists for women's suffrage; their struggle touched on the enfranchisement of black Americans after the Civil War, but both opposed the Fifteenth Amendment because it extended voting rights to black men only.

[2498] Currier & Ives, *The Age of Brass, or the Triumphs of Women's Rights* (1869), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-1921]. This anti-suffrage cartoon depicts women suffragists voting. One woman scolds a cowed man holding a baby; another woman, in pantaloons, holds a sign reading, “Vote for the Celebrated Man Tamer.” Such cartoons played to predominantly male fears about the reversal of men's and women's public and private roles and were designed to reinforce the Cult of True Womanhood and notions about the dangers of suffragism.

[2503] Anonymous, *The Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives Receiving a Deputation of Female Suffragists* (1871), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-2023]. This print, originally in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, shows Victoria Woodhull, backed by a group of woman suffragists, reading a speech to a skeptical judiciary committee. The

speech, about the legality of women’s suffrage, was based on the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

[2506] Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper*, *Woman Suffrage in Wyoming Territory. Scene at the Polls in Cheyenne* (1888), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-2235]. Woman suffrage was established in Wyoming in 1869. When Wyoming entered the union in 1890, it was the first state that allowed women the right to vote. Esther Morris is credited with convincing the territorial legislature to grant suffrage to women.

[5605] L. Prang & Co., *Representative Women* (1870), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-5535]. Seven individual portraits of leaders in the woman suffrage movement: Lucretia Mott, Grace Greenwood, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna E. Dickinson, Mary Ashton Rice Livermore, Lydia Maria Francis Child, and Susan B. Anthony.



[5005] Anonymous, *Immigrant Family Looking at Statue of Liberty from Ellis Island* (c. 1930), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50904].

domesticity and “true womanhood” that had dominated women’s lives in the first part of the nineteenth century. Instead, they demanded new freedoms and transformed the position of women in the United States. Their legacy lives on in contemporary women’s movements in support of such causes as economic equality and reproductive freedom.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why did the suffrage movement split into two separate groups in 1869? How did the NWSA differ from the AWSA?

Comprehension: What was the relationship between the suffrage movement and the movement for African American rights? How did it change over time?

Comprehension: What was a “new woman”?

Context: Examine the anti-suffrage cartoon featured in the archive. How are women voters portrayed in this cartoon? What anxieties about woman suffrage underlie the humor of this cartoon?

Context: In Henry James’s “Daisy Miller,” Winterbourne describes Daisy Miller as an “American girl” of a “pronounced type.” What characteristics does Winterbourne attribute to the “American girl”? Why is he so eager to label her as an example of a “type”? Does his vision of the “American girl” have anything in common with the concept of the “new woman”? Would Daisy see herself as a “new woman”?

Context: How do the debates and rifts within the woman suffrage movement compare to the debates and rifts that emerged within the movement for African American rights at the end of the nineteenth century? How do the strategies and philosophies employed by the NWSA, AWSA, and NAWSA compare to the strategies and philosophies developed by black leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois?

Exploration: What kinds of women’s issues continue to be a focus for reform movements? What strategies do contemporary women’s groups adopt to generate support for their causes?

Exploration: How have minority women writers like Toni Morrison and Gloria Anzaldúa broadened and revised nineteenth-century ideas about women’s rights?

Coming to America: Immigrants at Ellis Island

Between 1892 and 1954, over twelve million immigrants first touched American soil at Ellis Island. A small island located just south of New York City and within view of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island was the site of the nation’s largest immigrant reception center. On one day alone at the height of immigration, Ellis Island processed 11,750 individuals seeking entry into the United States. Despite its title of “reception center,” Ellis Island was neither hospitable nor pleasant: immigrants lined up in an enormous hall and

underwent intrusive inspections designed to weed out people with infectious diseases or political ideas that were considered dangerous or subversive. But despite the discomfort and bureaucracy, many newcomers were overjoyed to set foot on Ellis Island. In the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, they took to heart the promise chiseled into the base of the statue:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Many immigrants arrived in America believing that marvelous opportunities awaited them behind the “golden door.” In the last half of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of immigrants came from Eastern and Southern Europe—Eastern European Jews made up an especially high percentage of immigrants. They left their homelands to escape persecution, oppression, famine, and poverty. These immigrants brought only the possessions they could carry with them and traveled in “steerage berths” in cramped compartments below the deck of the ship. Some immigrants who could not afford to pay for their passage were brought over as “contract labor.” Under this system, businesses that wanted to hire cheap labor could pay the passage of immigrants willing to work for low wages in America. The cost of the workers’ fares would then be deducted from their wages once they began working. Contract labor was effectively a form of indentured servitude, but the U.S. government did not make it illegal until 1885 and even then rarely prosecuted companies who engaged in this exploitative practice.

For many immigrants, America was not the Promised Land they had dreamed of. Low wages, long hours, and unhealthy and even dangerous working environments made earning an adequate living almost impossible. Overcrowded tenements and high rents made domestic arrangements difficult and caused problems within families and between neighbors. Many immigrants also had trouble assimilating to the customs and manners of America, or felt resentful about being forced to give up or modify their traditions. When Anzia Yeziarska landed at Ellis Island, officials could not pronounce her name. They decided to rename her “Hattie Mayer,” which they felt sounded more Anglicized. Yeziarska resented this assault on her identity, and when she began to publish, she insisted on using her original, Eastern European name.

Immigrants also endured growing animosity and hostility from native-born Americans, who perceived these “foreigners” as threatening to the cultural and economic status quo. Immigrants’ willing-



[5004] Underwood & Underwood, *Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries—Immigrant Building, Ellis Island, New Yorker Harbor (c. 1904)*, courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-15539].



[5092] Lewis Hine, *Young Russian Jewess at Ellis Island (1905)*, courtesy of George Eastman House.

**“COMING TO AMERICA”
WEB ARCHIVE**

[5004] Underwood & Underwood, *Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries—Immigrant Building, Ellis Island. New York Harbor* (c. 1904), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-15539]. People from Eastern and Southern Europe poured into the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. This reception center off New York City processed arriving immigrants and attempted to keep out people with infectious diseases or political ideologies perceived as threatening.

[5005] Anonymous, *Immigrant Family Looking at Statue of Liberty from Ellis Island* (c. 1930), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50904]. Many found the United States less idyllic than they had imagined it would be. The reception center at Ellis Island received more than 20 million of the 27 million immigrants who came to the United States between 1880 and 1930.

[5006] Anonymous, *Italian Immigrant Family at Ellis Island* (c. 1910), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-67910]. Between 1880 and 1930, more people immigrated to America from Italy than from any other country. Many of these immigrants settled on New York’s Lower East Side. Their lives were the basis for much of the literature of the social realists.

[5092] Lewis Hine, *Young Russian Jewess at Ellis Island* (1905), courtesy of George Eastman House. Millions of immigrants passed through Ellis Island at the turn of the twentieth century. Just off the coast of New York City, immigrants were greeted by the Statue of Liberty, but were also introduced to harsh and often callous immigration policies, which reflected the ambivalence with which the United States welcomed its newest residents.

[8183] Anonymous, *The Voyage, No. 8* (c. 1920), reprinted in *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*, courtesy of the University of Washington Press. “How has anyone to know that my dwelling place would be a prison?” asks this poem, one of many written on the walls of the Angel Island detention center by

ness to work for low wages angered native-born Americans who resented competing with them for jobs, and the infusion of new religious and cultural practices caused some native-born people to fear that the “purity” of American culture was being assaulted. “Nativism,” or the belief that native-born Americans were superior to and needed to be protected from immigrants, created deep divisions between immigrants and other Americans. Anti-Catholic and Anti-Semitic sentiments began to color public discourse. Nativists frequently scapegoated immigrants, blaming them for the spread of crime and disease.

Nativist hostility finally culminated in the passage of congressional bills restricting immigration. The Chinese, in particular, were the target of a specific law designed to forbid their entry into the United States: the Chinese Exclusion Act was adopted in 1882. As a result, the immigrant reception center on Angel Island off the coast of California was even less welcoming than Ellis Island. Many hopeful Chinese immigrants were denied entry and then held in detention centers for months. Poetry written in Chinese covers the walls of the detention centers, parsing out the aspirations, dreams, and despair of the inmates.

Given the difficulties faced by immigrants, it is perhaps not surprising that, according to some estimates, nearly a third of those who arrived in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries eventually returned to their homes in Europe or Asia. But millions of immigrants stayed, and their contributions to American society and culture enriched and transformed the nation.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: How were Ellis Island and Angel Island different from one another?

Comprehension: What was “contract labor”?

Comprehension: What is “nativism”?

Context: In the story “Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” Sui Sin Far mentions a peripheral character who is being detained at Angel Island. How does this character function in the story? Why does Sui Sin Far include this information about Angel Island in a story about Chinese immigrants who have been living in America for many years?

Context: What kinds of assimilation pressures do the Eastern European immigrant characters in Abraham Cahan’s and Anzia Yezierska’s stories encounter?

Context: Read the Emma Lazarus poem “The New Colossus” featured in the archive. How does this poem describe America and its relationship to immigrants? What comparison is Lazarus drawing between ancient Greece and nineteenth-century America? What is the significance of personifying America as a woman?

Exploration: Should immigrants be expected to assimilate to American culture? If so, to what extent?

EXTENDED CONTEXTS

How the Other Half Lived: The Lower East Side

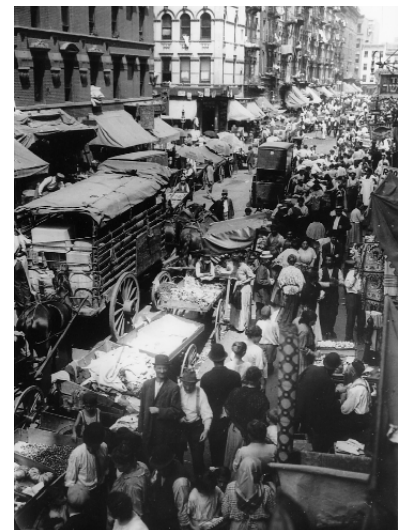
Touring the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the early years of the twentieth century, author Henry James was shocked by the “intensity of the material picture in the dense Yiddish quarter.” An area populated almost entirely by impoverished immigrants, the Lower East Side must have astonished James, who had spent most of his life surrounded by wealth and privilege. The neighborhood was indeed “intense” and “dense”; in fact, by the turn of the century the area had a population density of 330,000 people per square mile. Photographs of the Lower East Side from the period show narrow streets, towering run-down tenements, crowds of adults and children, throngs of pushcarts and peddlers, and laundry hanging out of windows. It was a densely inhabited area that afforded little distinction between the sidewalk and the street, or between private homes and public spaces. Home to literally millions of immigrants, the Lower East Side could seem like a confusing, crowded maze because it contained countless mini-communities composed of different ethnic groups. Irish, German, Italian, Greek, Chinese, African, African American, and Arab families lived in different sections of the neighborhood. But by far the largest ethnic community consisted of Jews who had emigrated from Eastern Europe. While these groups all maintained separate and diverse traditions—and sometimes found that their differences created rivalries and hostility—they were united by their poverty, their status as outsiders, and their desire to find material success in America.

Most individuals living on the Lower East Side at the turn of the century lived in tenement apartments or slept in cheap lodging houses. Typical tenement flats consisted of two or three very small rooms into which a family of between four and eight would live with a boarder or two. Workspaces were no less congested—the “sweatshops” were crowded with underpaid laborers who worked between thirteen and eighteen hours a day, six and sometimes seven days a week. In these conditions, crime, disease, fires, and accidents were common occurrences. The appalling poverty of the Lower East Side became a popular topic for reformers and sensation-seeking journalists alike. Many books and articles offered titillating glimpses into this “vicious underworld” and hysterically warned that the Lower East Side was breeding a “criminal element” that would soon menace the rest of the city. Others proposed social and economic reforms to address the inequities that compelled immigrants to live and work in such squalid conditions. Most notably, Jacob A. Riis’s newspaper articles, graphic photographs, and illustrated book-length exposé, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (1890), shocked Americans and led to some civic reforms designed to protect poor tenement-dwellers.

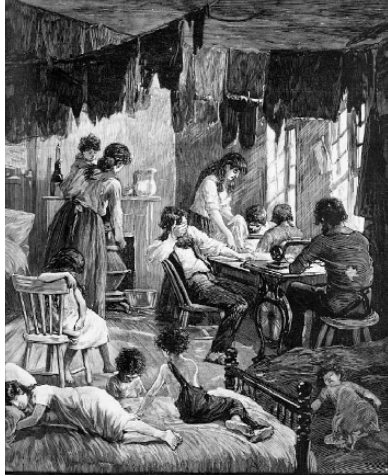
As crowded, exploitative, and oppressive as the Lower East Side may have been, however, it was not simply the pit of unmitigated

Chinese immigrants held there by U.S. authorities. Other examples of these poems can be found in the archive, [8184] through [8191].

[9092] Emma Lazarus, *The New Colossus* (1883), courtesy of the U.S. Department of State Web site. Lazarus’s famous poem, which reads in part, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” appears on the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, an impressive sight that greeted immigrants as they began the difficult and sometimes degrading task of passing through the Ellis Island immigration facility.



[6352] Anonymous, *Hester Street, NY* (c. 1903), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.



[5124] T. De Thulstrup, *Home of the Poor* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75197].

“HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVED” WEB ARCHIVE

[5023] Detroit Publishing Company, *Mulberry Street, New York City* (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-1584]. New York City received huge numbers of immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. In the bustling streets of the Lower East Side, Old World met New in a population that ranged from Eastern European and Russian Jews to Irish Catholics.

[5124] T. De Thulstrup, *Home of the Poor* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75197]. This illustration shows an interior view of a crowded New York City tenement. The living conditions of the city’s poor at the turn of the twentieth century eventually sparked a wave of social reform.

[5125] Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper, New York City—The Recent “Heated Term” and Its Effect upon the Population of the Tenement District* (1882), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-75193]. The tenements that were home to many of New York City’s immigrants were often dismal and usually lacked proper sanitary facilities.

misery and evil that many nineteenth-century journalists portrayed. Rather, in spite of the rampant poverty and harsh working conditions, the neighborhood was a dynamic community infused with a vibrant and diverse cultural life. Ethnic restaurants and saloons offered an enticing variety of food and drink; halls hosted dances, weddings, union meetings, and scholarly lectures; theatres and music halls mounted plays and concerts; and synagogues, churches, temples, and schools served as important social centers. The inhabitants of the Lower East Side formed a thriving community in their crowded section of Manhattan, melding their old traditions with new ones to form a diverse culture that had a lasting impact on New York and on America.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is a tenement? What is a sweatshop?

Context: How does Abraham Cahan describe the realities of labor in a sweatshop in his story “A Sweat-Shop Romance”? How does his description of life, work, and leisure among Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side compare to the photographs and illustrations of Lower East Side life featured in the archive?

Exploration: How do contemporary journalists, writers, and filmmakers portray the slums and housing projects that still exist in many of America’s urban areas? Do you think sensationalism still plays a role in depictions of urban poverty?

Elevating an Elite: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Talented Tenth

At the turn of the twentieth century, black people in the American South had yet to enjoy many of the rights and opportunities promised them by the Emancipation Proclamation, the Fifteenth Amendment, and the federal Civil Rights Act. Instead, many African Americans were denied the right to vote by expensive poll taxes, property requirements, or bogus “literacy tests.” At the same time, “Jim Crow” laws enforced segregation in virtually all public spaces in the South, from railroad cars to schools. Violence against African Americans—including lynching—was on the rise.

Faced with this overwhelming, systematized oppression, African American leaders like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois concluded that education was their best strategy for achieving social advancement and civil rights. While they agreed on the need for education, however, they held extremely different ideas about what kind of curriculum would best suit their goal of asserting African American equality. Washington held that blacks should be trained only in practical, vocational skills such as farming, carpentry, mechanical trades, sewing, and cooking. The Tuskegee Institute, where Washington served as the director, dedicated itself to providing black students with these kinds of practical skills. Du Bois, on

the other hand, insisted that broader educational opportunities should be available to at least some African Americans. His ideas centered on his theory of a **Talented Tenth**, an elite group of gifted and polished individuals who could benefit from a rigorous classical education and then lead their entire race forward.

In his 1903 essay “The Talented Tenth,” Du Bois claimed that “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.” According to Du Bois, a small, uniquely endowed elite could alone make artistic and scholarly contributions to world development on behalf of the entire race. He perceived the relationship between this talented elite and the rest of the group as a symbiotic one: the larger group would support the talented elite, who would in turn raise the level of the entire group. The Talented Tenth would combat the degrading tendencies of what Du Bois called “The Submerged Tenth,” a group he characterized as “criminals, prostitutes, and loafers.” In Du Bois’s scheme, the Talented Tenth would work not simply within the group but would also direct their efforts against the forces of racism.

While Du Bois intended his plan to benefit all African Americans, the theory of the Talented Tenth has obvious problematic implications. The elevation of an elite segment of African American society with special access to opportunities and resources would create sharp distinctions and classes within the community as a whole, and the belief that only a small group has the potential to make important contributions is profoundly anti-democratic. But despite the exclusivity of the notion of the Talented Tenth, Du Bois’s ideas advocated broad educational opportunities for at least some African Americans and inspired many with hope.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: According to Du Bois, what kinds of responsibilities do the Talented Tenth have to the rest of the group? In Du Bois’s formulation, how would the Talented Tenth benefit the larger African American community?

Context: Early in his career, Du Bois was offered a position teaching at Tuskegee Institute, the vocational school that Booker T. Washington directed. Why do you think Du Bois decided not to accept the position? How are his ideas about black education at odds with Washington’s mission for Tuskegee?

Exploration: In Charles W. Chesnut’s story “The Wife of His Youth,” the main character is a member of an elite African American club that seems to consider itself akin to a “Talented Tenth.” How does the story critique the elitism of this organization?

Exploration: What kinds of issues inform contemporary debates

ties. These harsh conditions challenged immigrants and contributed to a perception that immigrants were somehow “damaging” the country.

[5126] Lewis Wickes Hines, *Rear View of Tenement, 134 1/2 Thompson ST., New York City* (1912), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, National Child Labor Committee Collection [LC-USZ62-93116]. Photograph of the back of a tenement housing-complex in New York City. Like writer Theodore Dreiser, photographer Lewis Wickes Hines documented social conditions in America at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[6352] Anonymous, *Hester Street, NY* (c.1903), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Hester Street is one of many places on the Lower East Side of Manhattan that Anzia Yezierska described in her writing.



[7102] J. E. Purdy, *W. E. B. Du Bois* (1904), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-28485].

**“ELEVATING AN ELITE”
WEB ARCHIVE**

[3079] Richmond Barth, *Bust of Booker T. Washington* (c. 1920), courtesy of NARA [NWDNS-H-HN-BAR-38].

Washington was the most prominent African American at the turn of the twentieth century; he worked for most of his life to expand and support Tuskegee College in Alabama; his best-known literary work is *Up from Slavery*.

[3355] Jack Delano, *At the Bus Station in Durham, North Carolina* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF33-020522-M2].

African American man in a segregated waiting room at a bus station. Jim Crow laws severely divided the experiences of whites and African Americans in the South.

[4801] Arthur Rothstein, *Sharecropper’s Children* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-025464-D].

Photograph of three African American children on a porch. Landowners rarely kept sharecroppers’ homes in good condition. Du Bois hoped that an educated “Talented Tenth” of African Americans would help lift such children out of poverty.

[7102] J. E. Purdy, *W. E. B. Du Bois* (1904), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-28485]. Taken a year after the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, this portrait shows Du Bois as a refined and serious intellectual. In his lifetime Du Bois led the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and championed the cause of African American advancement through education.

about educational opportunities for minority groups? Why is affirmative action such a controversial policy in contemporary America?

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal and Creative Responses

1. *Journal*: Using the autobiographies of Booker T. Washington and Henry Adams for inspiration, compose a journal entry in which you describe your own education. What are the most valuable skills and life lessons you have learned? What circumstances or incidents have most shaped your development?
2. *Poet’s Corner*: Examine Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt’s “The Palace-Burner,” “A Pique at Parting,” or “Her Word of Reproach.” Pay attention to how Piatt uses dialogue and multiple voices to develop her ideas. Try rewriting one of these poems using a single lyric voice. How did your revision change the poem? What difficulties did you encounter in translating Piatt’s many voices into a single voice?
3. *Multimedia*: Imagine that you have been asked to produce a documentary on turn-of-the-century New York. Using the *American Passages* archive and slide-show software, create a multimedia presentation in which you explore the different aspects of New York society at that time.

Problem-Based Learning Assignments

1. Imagine that you and your peers sit on the town council of a small suburb of Pittsburgh in 1900. Andrew Carnegie, the wealthy Pittsburgh industrialist, has offered to donate funds to build and operate a library in your town. Some citizens of the town do not want to accept the gift because they believe that Carnegie’s money is tainted by his unscrupulous business practices. Others believe that the benefits of a library outweigh any scruples they might have about accepting a robber baron’s money. Deliberate as a council, come up with a plan of action, and prepare a statement of support for your plan.
2. You have been asked to create a museum dedicated to interpreting the immigrant experience in New York. Where will you house the museum? What kinds of information and activities will you provide?
3. It is 1905 and the state of Mississippi has allocated funds to charter a new school for African American students. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois are holding a meeting to discuss how the school should use its funds and what its educational mission should be. Imagine that you have been hired to help

Washington and Du Bois prepare for the meeting at which they will debate this issue. Divide into two groups and prepare your arguments.

GLOSSARY

Bintl Briv A Yiddish, “Dear Abby”-style advice column introduced by Abraham Cahan in the Yiddish newspaper the *Jewish Daily Forward*. The *Bintl Briv* (or “Bundle of Letters”) printed questions from readers and offered authoritative advice on romantic, family, and social issues. (A selection of *Bintl Briv* columns can be found in *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*.)

limited third-person narration A mode of narration that relies on narrators who are not omniscient but instead render descriptions and observations through the limitations of the central character. Henry James’s interest in psychology led him to develop the use of limited third-person narration, which is often regarded as one of his major contributions to American fiction. Readers must do more work—and involve themselves more in the process of meaning-making—to understand the relationship of the stories to their narration.

monopoly Businesses that have exclusive control of a commodity or service and are thus able to manipulate the prices and availability of those commodities and services as well as to restrict potential competitors from entering the market.

“new woman” A turn-of-the-century term for women who resisted the ideals of domesticity and “true womanhood” that had dominated women’s lives in the first part of the nineteenth century. Such women challenged traditional social conventions by acquiring an education, working in the business world, asserting some degree of sexual freedom, and living independently of men. “New women” were also associated with such radical behaviors as wearing trousers and smoking.

realism The literary commitment to the truthful, accurate representation of American life as it was experienced by ordinary Americans. A “realist” aesthetic infused literature in the last half of the nineteenth century. Realism was characterized by its uncompromising, literal representations of the particularities of the material world and the human condition. This passion for finding and presenting the truth led many American practitioners of realism to explore characters, places, and events that had previously seemed inappropriate subject matter for literature.

robber baron A derisive term for the handful of enormously wealthy men who enjoyed virtually exclusive control over such important industries as steel, oil, banking, and railroads in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Robber barons were criticized for their ruthless and often unscrupulous business practices.

“The Talented Tenth” An elite group of gifted and polished individuals who, according to W. E. B. du Bois’s theory, could bene-

fit from a rigorous classical education and then lead African Americans forward. Du Bois believed that the African American community should focus its resources on cultivating this group.

trust A combination of companies held in common by a board of trustees, which controls most or all of the stock of the constituent companies. This kind of organization allows large corporations to centralize their concerns and thus economize on expenses, regulate production, and discourage competition. For all practical purposes, the formation of steel, oil, bank, and railroad trusts made competition virtually impossible, since the monopolies enjoyed such tight control of their markets

woman suffrage The movement for female enfranchisement. It took almost seventy-five years of activism before American women finally gained the right to vote in 1920.

Yiddish A language spoken mainly by European Jews. Based on German, Yiddish was also inflected by Hebrew, Slavic, and eventually American vocabularies. Abraham Cahan frequently wrote in Yiddish, and Anzia Yeziarska incorporated Yiddish phrases and captured the cadence and rhythm of Yiddish speech in her characters' dialogue.

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